



THE INDEPENDENT

No 2825

THURSDAY 1 MAY 1997

WEATHER: Warm and sunny (45p) 40p

'The English People believes itself to be free: it is gravely mistaken; it is free only during the election of MPs; as soon as the Members are elected the people is enslaved.' J J ROUSSEAU

So today is freedom day

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

The country's political leaders last night handed the election over to the people, with appeals for their support in a ballot that will either return Tony Blair, at 43, as the youngest Prime Minister for a century, or give John Major the first fifth term since 1828.

Mr Major repeated his warning that change was dangerous, saying: "I understand why some people may find the argument for change attractive. Eighteen years is a long time, the electorate know us, wars and all. And it's easy to overlook the achievements."

"But if you're one of the many who have still to make up your minds, with all the force I possess, I say don't fall for it. Don't be taken in. One cross in the wrong place on the ballot pa-

'British democracy can certainly improve, but it's alive and kicking. Give it a go'
Leading article, page 21

per tomorrow could wreck everything we have achieved together."

At his morning press conference, the Conservative leader said nine times: "It's too good to give up", adding: "In one careless moment, don't throw our success away."

But with the opinion polls repeating their forecast of a landslide Labour victory, Mr Blair was maintaining his insistence that nothing could be taken for granted. He said he wanted to rebuild the voters' trust by offering a 10-point contract, including central pledges on tax, education, health, crime, sleaze, and Europe.

He told *The Independent*: "The very reason we have this contract with the British people is precisely so that we can try and rebuild the trust."

"One of the most frustrating things for us, since we've been in opposition for 18 years is that people say that all the politicians are all the same. Whatever we vote, it doesn't make any difference."

"It's not the case that we can't make any difference. The promises that we have made are specific, they are limited, but they are specific, and if we deliver on those then I think we are entitled to trust."

However, Mr Blair then added: "If we don't deliver on those, then we won't be."

Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, released a letter to two million floating voters in which he trumped his earlier claim that his party was on the verge of a major breakthrough.

It said the Liberal Democrats stood "on the threshold of an historic victory... The only vote that will make a difference for you and your family's future is a vote for the Liberal Democrats."

The messages were reiterated during the day as the leaders bannistered around the country, with Mr Major at one point being barracked by Labour supporters during a walk-about in Stevenage, a Labour target.

Mr Blair said in an impromptu speech at Stockton market, another Labour target: "You either wake up on Friday 2 May with another five years of the most discredited and sleazy government. If you don't want that, come out and support us tomorrow and end up with a new Labour government and a better future for Britain."

But Mr Blair's biggest problem was holding down all triumphalist talk of victory, and the action that would flow from his election tomorrow.

Against that background, senior Labour sources dismissed speculation about Mr Blair's plans for Cabinet-making, something he would turn to tomorrow, in the event of victory.

However, suggestions of a large-scale purge of traditionalist, old Labour frontbenchers were being heavily discounted by well-informed sources yesterday. *The Independent* was told that there would be no "bloodbath".

While there are 27 members of the shadow cabinet and only 22 paid Cabinet places available, it would not be possible for Mr Blair to give all his shadow cabinet team full Cabinet rank, but one source said that while some would inevitably be disappointed, Mr Blair would want to have



Art of persuasion: A 1930s painting by Francis Wilson to be auctioned later this month at Bonhams

a good mix of people in his administration.

The source said that contrary to some speculation, Mr Blair was well pleased with his frontbench team, which took account of the balance of the Parliamentary Labour Party. He would want to continue

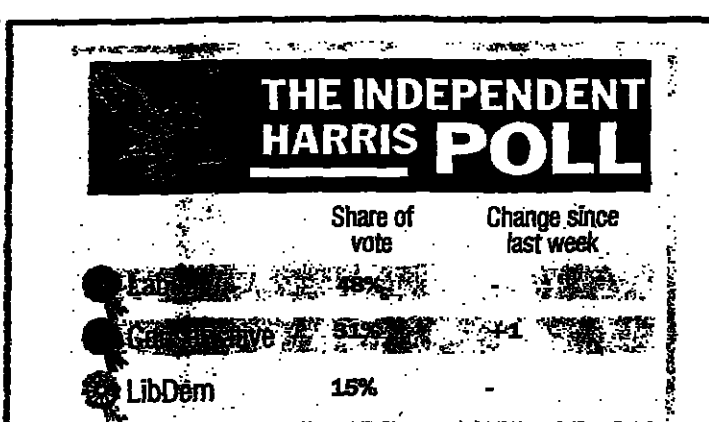
with that balance in government.

But the top jobs have already been marked out for John Prescott, the deputy who has delivered such stalwart efforts in a nationwide campaign; Gordon Brown, shadow Chancellor and head of the Milbank headquarters campaign team; Robin

Cook, the shadow Foreign Secretary;

David Blunkett, shadow Education Secretary; Jack Straw, shadow Home Secretary, and Margaret Beckett, who is currently serving as shadow Trade and Industry Secretary.

In the event of a Labour victory, speculation will also be prompted



Labour keeps 17-point lead

The final *Independent/Harris* poll suggests that the widely-expected closing of the gap in the last days of the campaign has failed to materialise, writes John Rentoul.

Labour retains a commanding 17-point lead, the sort of advantage in the polls not seen since Margaret Thatcher went to the country in 1983 after the Falklands war and won a 144-seat majority.

If translated into seats, our poll would give Tony Blair more than 400 MPs and a majority of between 173 and 179 in the Commons, although Tom Simpson, managing director of Harris Research, predicts a majority of about 99 if there are as many "shy Tories" and "late swingers" as five years ago.

The final polls from the other companies also suggest that Labour's lead is holding firm, with NOP for *Reuter* yesterday putting Labour 22 points ahead on 50 per cent. A surprising feature of the NOP poll is that it puts Sir James Goldsmith's Referendum Party on 4 per cent, whereas today's *Independent* poll puts them on only 1 per cent.

Harris Research interviewed 1,154 adults face-to-face in their homes on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday this week. The figures exclude 14 per cent who didn't know, wouldn't say or wouldn't vote, who could not be allocated to a party on the basis of how they voted in 1992.

Independent poll in full, page 12

INSIDE

Vote for the cocktail party, page 22
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THE INDEPENDENT
election '97

about the new prime minister's attitude towards the Civil Service.

It is expected that Mr Blair would want to appoint Jonathan Powell, a former diplomat and his current chief of staff, as his principal private secretary - a post which was once held by his brother, Charles, in Margaret

Thatcher's office. There is also certain to be strong speculation about the successor to Sir Robin Butler, Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service, the most senior mandarin in the country, who is due to retire at the start of next year.

Asylum cases clear-up

Sam Coates

Immigration officials have exploited the political vacuum created by the election - and the absence of MPs - rapidly to resolve more than 12,000 sensitive asylum cases. Many of these will result in "enforcement actions".

The Home Office's term for the repatriation of someone back to their country of origin.

According to a senior Home Office official, the project has so far been "remarkably successful", with as many as 600 cases being decided in the last three weeks. The Immigration and Nationality Directorate - a department of the Home Office - has created a taskforce to deal with these controversial cases.

The 25-strong group, part of the Asylum Appeals Implementation Project, started work on 7 April - a fortnight after Parliament was prorogued, and

the day before its dissolution.

The scheme was devised in January, but a senior Home Office official told *The Independent*: "It was very convenient that it was set up at a time when no MPs were available to defend constituents."

The director of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Claude Moraes, has written to Home Office Minister, Timothy Kirkwood, asking him to "come clean" on why the taskforce was set up. He also asked whether it was coincidence that the new system had come into operation just before the dissolution of Parliament.

Once an initial decision on an asylum-seeker has been taken, it is much more difficult to overturn, and applicants lose their right to social security benefits. It is impossible to tell how successful the scheme has been because Home Office figures on

deportations, or "enforcement actions" as it prefers them to be known, lump together asylum and immigration cases. However, a senior Home Office figure said that more than 200 cases are being dealt with each week.

According to a written Commons answer from Mr Kirkwood to Mike Gapes, then MP for Ilford South, the Home Office acknowledged that the project "has the aim of producing a higher rate of decisions within the staff resources already allocated to this block of work".

A Home Office spokesman said ministers were keen to clear the backlog of asylum cases, which had risen to 69,000 18 months ago but was now around 10,000 lower.

"People can only be removed once their case has been completed and they have exercised their rights to appeal. That takes months," she said.

QUICKLY



Academic failure

Mike Leigh, awarded one of the film industry's highest honours by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, resigned from the academy because of its failure to acknowledge his films for more than 20 years, he told *The Independent*. Page 3

Hong Kong pledge

The Chief Executive designate of the new Hong Kong government vowed that a Tiananmen Square-type massacre could never happen in the territory. Page 16

The Mafia is back

Andrew Gumbel
Palermo

A new generation of mafiosi is tightening its grip once more around Italy.

After a euphoric period of high-profile arrests, mass trials and a veritable flurry of informers who have shed light on the darkest corners of post-war Italian history, the struggle to defeat Cosa Nostra is crumbling.

That is the conclusion of magistrates working in Sicily, and confirmed by an investigation by *The Independent*.

"People have a great desire to convince themselves that the war against the Mafia has been won," said Antonio Ingrao, one of the brightest young prosecutors in Palermo. "But our impression today is less optimistic... There is a sense of isolation and abandonment by the

state. People are once again feeling the presence of the bosses, both big and small."

The new Mafia may be less violent than the variety that held sway in the late 1980s and early 1990s - there have been no magistrates or politicians shot dead in the streets - but organised crime groups have nevertheless taken advantage of political instability, recession and a weakening magistrature to spread their businesses abroad and extend their climate of fear.

They have capitalised on their considerable financial strength to spread into northern Italy, Europe and establish links in the east, notably in Albania, Turkey and Russia. In addition to drugs, they now trade in arms, nuclear materials and toxic waste.

In Italy towns and villages are beset by extortion rackets and

random violence. In the backwaters of southern Sicily, gangsters are shooting each other in public squares and torturing shopowners who refuse to pay protection. With unemployment rising, recruitment is easy and the state is either too weak or too scared to stop the rot.

The fight against the Mafia was invigorated after the murder of Giovanni Falcone, the groundbreaking Sicilian magistrate, five years ago this month. His killers were rapidly tried and their evidence in turn led to further arrests. That momentum, however, has now gone.

The main reason is a desire by the political class to put an end to the many judicial scandals that felled the old Christian Democrat-led order. The priority in Rome is no longer to strengthen the judiciary, but rather to crack down on the

magistrates to prevent further assaults on the status quo.

Most striking is a campaign to discredit Mafia informers, known as *pentiti*, whose testimony has been the foundation of judicial investigations and trials in the past 15 years. Having blown the lid on the secretive workings of Cosa Nostra, the *pentiti* have begun talking in detail about Mafia links with politicians, terrorist groups and shady masonic lodges.

A new draft law on Mafia informers tightens the rules on their collaboration and magistrates fear they will cease to come forward, or retract sworn testimony. Moreover, a law on specially tough prison regimes for Mafia bosses is being re-laid, and two high-security prisons particularly feared by Cosa Nostra are being closed.

Mafia off the chain, page 18

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news

significant shorts

Call for total ban on use of mobile phones while driving

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents has called on the next government to ban the use of mobile phones while driving, even when used completely "hands-free". Motoring organisations have reacted by describing such a ban as "unrealistic" and "unworkable".

The move by the RoSPA follows a meeting of their national road safety committee yesterday morning and two recent court cases involving the use of mobile phones by motorists.

"We are saying that calls should not be made or received on the move," said John Howard, RoSPA's director of safety, "and we plan to take this forward with the police and the government".

The committee members, who are drawn from the Department of Transport, road safety groups, the motoring industry and the Association of Chief Police Officers, will also encourage the police to take stronger action against drivers who use phones. ACPO have said they are "broadly supportive" of the policy, but the RAC said last night it was unrealistic to call for a blanket ban on all mobile phones in cars.

The police cannot currently charge someone for using a mobile phone behind the wheel, instead they must prove a motorist is driving carelessly or dangerously or that they were not in a position to control the vehicle.

Simon Reeve

PC who stole from pensioner jailed

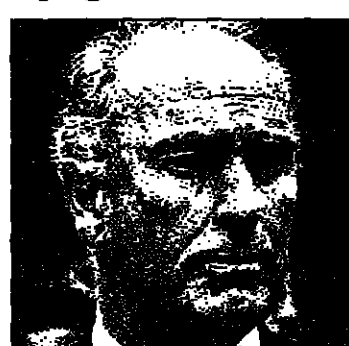
A debt-ridden police officer, who betrayed the trust of an 80-year-old disabled pensioner he befriended while on duty and stole her £7,800 life savings, was jailed for 18 months yesterday.

PC Trevor Standing, 36, who wept as the judge branded him a "mean, opportunist thief", stumbled on Kathleen Lyons' hoard of cash while trying to repair her television.

PC Standing, a father of three, described as "exemplary" after an 18-year career spanning both the Army and police force, hid most of the cash in the loft at his home, but used £500 to pay off bills. He also used the cash to buy a second-hand television for Mrs Lyons and pretended it was a gift from him.

Passing sentence Southwark Crown Court in south London, Judge Geoffrey Rivlin QC, told PC Standing, of Sundale Avenue, South Croydon, that he had committed a "grave breach of trust".

Gyngell attacks TV takeover tycoons



Bruce Gyngell, the outspoken managing director of Yorkshire Television, has launched a scathing attack on the "takeover tycoons" who are threatening the quality of British television.

Mr Gyngell, who was addressing the Cambridge Union last night, said: "In recent years we have attracted a new breed, businessmen who are only interested in television for the money they can make."

Instead of television being a cultural asset, there is a danger that it will be crushed by the bean-counters. Corporate accountants, takeover tycoons and here-today-gone-tomorrow managers who care nothing about quality."

Mr Gyngell, former head of TV-am, is fighting a rearguard action to prevent the takeover of YTV by Granada. Paul McCann

Skier faces prosecution over death

Discipline on the slopes has long been a serious affair in North America's ski resorts. Nathan Hall, 18, a ski racer, is facing criminal prosecution in Colorado following a fatal collision with a British beginner in Vail on 20 April. The state is pondering charges either of manslaughter or negligent homicide.

Mr Hall struck Alan Cobb, 33, a cabinet-maker from Ipswich, who was skiing only for the fourth time. He died from a fractured skull. If Mr Hall is charged with manslaughter and convicted, he could face 16 years in jail. A speeding skier "is a weapon too", said District Attorney, Pete Michaelson. David Osborne

Bordeaux heist leaves sour taste

A £500 reward was offered today for information into the theft of £30,000 worth of rare wines from a warehouse.

Fifty cases of mainly red and white Bordeaux wines were taken out through a hole in the roof at Reid Wines in Marsh Lane, Hallatrow, north Somerset. Simon Wood, a partner in the company, said the wines were too young to be drunk. "What's most upsetting is that whoever took these wines probably won't like them and they'll just throw them away," he said. "Most of them need at least another 10 years to mature before drinking."

people



Chelsea Clinton: Exam results placed her in the academic elite (Photograph: Reuters)

She's leaving home: Chelsea chooses Californian college

D ivulging what had become a veritable state secret, the White House announced yesterday that Chelsea Clinton, the 17-year-old only child of Bill and Hillary, will attend Stanford University in California to study medicine. Stanford is one of the US's premier - and most expensive - universities, with a particularly strong reputation for medical research.

Its location, in an idyllic setting at Palo Alto south of San Francisco, makes it also one of the furthest from Washington. Chelsea has apparently promised to introduce her parents to the virtues of computer e-mail before she departs.

Chelsea's choice had become a hot topic of gossip in recent weeks, with the First Daughter's every trip out of the capital scrutinised for signs of her educational intentions. Yale - her parents' alma mater - was seen as the "romantic" option; Harvard and the select Wellesley College were also shortlisted, with Princeton, 40 minutes outside New York, the strong favourite after she made a repeat visit there.

Both parents had insisted that the choice of college, and course, was entirely Chelsea's. She had reportedly been vacillating between medicine and history, but after accompanying her mother on a recent tour

of Africa, which included visits to many aid projects, she seems to have settled on medicine.

After arriving in Washington from Arkansas five years ago, Chelsea attended the elite Sidwell Friends' school, a Quaker foundation, in north-west Washington. Even without her highly-placed parents, her high score in the university qualifying aptitude test, which placed her in the top 15,000 school-leavers in the US, would have given her the pick of the best colleges.

Academic excellence apart, Stanford is known for its astronomical fees (more than \$20,000 a year for tuition, with another \$7,000 for lodging). No wonder Clinton senior recently joked that he was thinking of approaching his former rival for the presidency, the millionaire Republican Bob Dole, for a loan.

Joking, indeed, seems to be the President's way of dealing with Chelsea's departure - which both parents have conceded will be a wrenching experience. "The bad news," Mr Clinton told a recent dinner, "is that our only child is leaving home; the good news is that it frees up another bedroom." Washington was scandalised earlier in the year by reports that big Democratic Party donors had been rewarded with bed and breakfast at the White House. Mary Dejevsky, Washington

'Independent' writer takes top prize in foodie Oscars

Simon Hopkinson (right), who writes on food for *The Independent Magazine*, has been awarded the title of Food Writer of the Year in the prestigious Gienfiddich Awards.

He was presented with his award before more than 500 guests at The Dorchester hotel in London on Tuesday night. Although Hopkinson is a chef who has come comparatively recently to food writing, he has already won a Gienfiddich book of the year award for *Roast Chicken and Other Stories*, along with his co-author, Lindsey Bareham, in 1995.

This year's book of the year was presented to Gordon Ramsay, a Michelin-starred chef, for his debut book, *Passion for Flavour*. BBC Education was awarded the Gienfiddich Trophy, for its *Techno: Food*, a series of programmes catering for the food technology module in the National Curriculum. The awards, the industry's premier accolades, recognise excellence in writing, publishing and broadcasting on food and drink matters.

Hopkinson - the founder and co-owner of the popular Bibendum restaurant in London, loved by foodies and celebrities alike - grew up in Bury, Lancashire, and was encouraged to enter the restaurant industry by his parents, both keen chefs. His first venture



was a small restaurant in Fishguard, Wales, which he eventually left to move on to London to work in such fashionable establishments as Hixaire.

Renowned for his inventive style, Hopkinson is often described as one of the founding fathers of modern British cooking. He has been with *The Independent Magazine* for two years and is currently writing *The Prawn Cocktail Years*, a book which should reinvent and rehabilitate food clichés such as Black Forest gâteau and coq au vin.

Each winner received a commemorative engraved quail (a Scottish drinking cup), a cheque for £200 and a case of single malt scotch whisky. Readers wishing to sample some of Simon's fare should note: although he will not be writing in this Saturday's *Independent*, his column will return the following weekend. Simon Reeve

Doncaster council chief suspended

Doug Hale, the chief executive of Doncaster Council, has been suspended on full pay while an investigation into allegations of fraud by the District Auditor and police, continues.

The Labour-controlled council first came to prominence in January when the district auditor, Gordon Sutton, revealed that he was concerned about foreign trips and expensive "working lunches" taken by councillors and some officers.

The council's leader and deputy leader, Peter Welsh and Ray Stockhill, resigned in March, but this is the first time that any of the authority's officers have been affected by the inquiries.

Mr Hale has been chief executive of Doncaster for six years and was formerly married to Rita Hale, one of Britain's foremost experts on local government finance.

While the police investigation was initially focused on councillors' overspending, it has recently widened to look at land deals, the granting of planning permission to developers and the allocation of contracts by the council.

The council last night confirmed Mr Hale's suspension and said: "The scale of the inquiry has yet to be finalised, but we will look at all possible areas of the management of the council."

Ali Taylor, the director of education, has been appointed as acting chief executive. Christian Wolmar

Spain delighted by royal wedding plans

To the delight of a nation of *Hola!* readers (or *Hola!* as it is known here), Spain is to celebrate a royal wedding in October. Princess Cristina, 31, youngest daughter of King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia and third in line to the Spanish throne, yesterday became engaged to a Basque handball star, Inaki Urdangarin, 29.

The announcement by the Zarzuela palace concludes weeks of feverish speculation that has filled gossip columns, since their relationship became public in March.

Princess Cristina, a keen sportswoman, met her fiancé at the Olympic Games in Atlanta last August, when Urdangarin won a bronze medal as a member of the Spanish handball team.

The son of a prosperous Basque father and an aristocratic Belgian mother, Urdangarin lives in Barcelona and is a member of the reigning national champion handball team attached to mighty Futbol Club Barcelona.

Princess Cristina moved to Barcelona in 1992 for

six months, and stayed. She learned Catalan and worked as an exhibitions organiser for the cultural foundation of La Caixa savings bank. She has a political science degree from a Madrid university and a Masters from New York.

Cristina shares the easy, open manner of her elder sister, the Infanta Elena, whose marriage two years ago in Seville to the gangling sprig of one of Spain's most blue-blooded families captivated the country in a nationwide fiesta.

Urdangarin, tall, blue-eyed and handsome, is no mere upper-class beefcake. He plans to finish a business studies degree and retire from professional handball within three years.

Cristina's marriage will take place in Barcelona, and leaves only Prince Felipe, 29, heir to the throne, unmarried. Madrid is earmarked for his eventual wedding, but, despite being linked to a number of young women, his choice of bride remains unknown. Elizabeth Nash, Madrid

briefing

ASTRONOMY

Search for life focuses on sun's twin in distant galaxy

A twin to the sun has been discovered that offers the best chance yet of finding extraterrestrial intelligence, astronomers reported yesterday. The star in the constellation of Scorpius, 46 light years from the Earth, is more like the sun than any other investigated before.

Although the sun is often dismissed as an average star, it is actually quite unusual. It is one of only 4 per cent of stars in our galaxy known as G-type main sequence stars. These are yellow stars that burn hydrogen into helium at their centres, and are considered the most obvious target for the search for extraterrestrial life.

Brazilian astronomer Gustavo Porto de Mello, of the Federal University, Rio de Janeiro, and Licio da Silva of the National Observatory, found that the star 18 Scorpii is a virtual carbon copy of the sun.

Using telescopes in Chile and Brazil, they found that the star's mass, temperature, colour, surface gravity and iron abundance closely match the sun's. The star emits 5 per cent more light than the sun and is slightly older.

The astronomers, whose findings will be published in next month's issue of *Astrophysical Journal Letters*, told *New Scientist* magazine: "We recommend that it be considered for strong priority in the ongoing planet searching programmes as well as in SETI (Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence) surveys."

NATURE

Whaling may have saved the seals

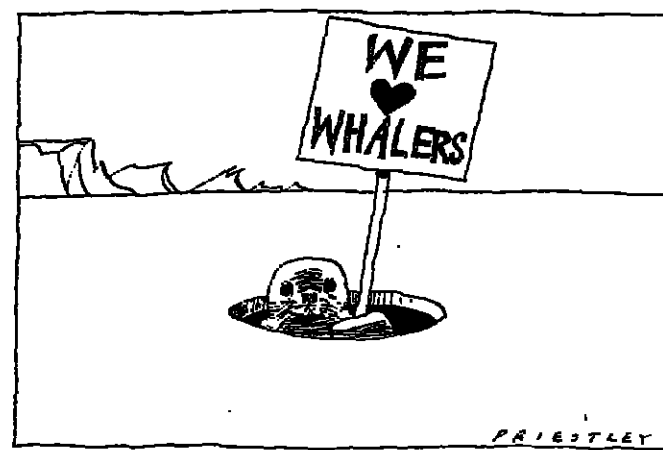
A fur seal population explosion in the Antarctic may have been aided by the whaling industry, British scientists said yesterday. Examination of seal hair found in lake sediments revealed that the colony was almost twice as big as it had been at any time in the past 6,600 years.

Researchers from the British Antarctic Survey in Cambridge said that between 1976 and 1994 the number of seals visiting the island each summer from breeding grounds in South Georgia had leaped from fewer than 100 to 20,500.

Writing in the science journal *Nature*, the researchers suggest that the Southern Ocean whaling industry, which has reduced the baleen whale population by 90 per cent since 1922, may be partly responsible.

The whales feed on vast amounts of a shrimp known as krill, which are also food for seals. An abundance of krill caused by the diminished number of whales is thought to have helped promote seal population growth.

The seals, hunted to near extinction in the 19th and early present century, are now said to be causing extensive destruction of vegetation and soil erosion.



SOCIETY

Nail-filers need not apply

Secretaries are doing it for themselves. Nearly half now wield a degree of financial muscle within their companies. Forty-six per cent of secretaries, many of whom are now called anything from 'Office Manager' to 'Business Administrator', can authorise expenditure on their own, without having to ask for additional clearance elsewhere in the company, according to a survey of 248 secretaries by recruitment specialists Reed Employment Services.

Nearly 30 per cent of those surveyed could sanction spending up to £1,000 on their own authority, with 18 per cent having higher limits or an unlimited amount which they can sign off on any one project without have to clear their decisions by a manager.

Out of the total sample, 12 per cent can sign off between £1,000 and £10,000 on any one project, with 2 per cent able to sign off between £10,000 and £50,000, and 4 per cent either having no set limit or an unlimited budget in their own control.

Many secretaries are said to be fed-up with colleagues and employers who under-value the term 'secretary'. When asked what they would like to be called, they made suggestions such as Manager to the Managing Director, El Supremo, or even Chief Dogbody. Simon Reeve

WEATHER

Few showers as drought goes on

April showers have been almost non-existent this year - with some places having less than a quarter of their usual rainfall. It looked like being a practically rain-free month until the last week, when a few drops fell.

Temperatures, on the other hand, were a little above the average - although warm days were frequently followed by frosty nights. The thermometer almost touched 22°C (72°F) at Bristol and Gatwick Airport on 9 and 10 April respectively, but fell to below 2°C (28°F) in Bournemouth on the night spanning those two dates.

The best of the sunshine was found in the South and East - but Northern Ireland and much of Scotland had a dull month.

The last week of the month produced a long-awaited change, as weather fronts moved into the North and West of the country.

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Labour

سكرا من الامن

Mike Leigh's secret is revealed



'This is the first time that anyone has had a Bafta award for anything of mine. I've only had two nominations before ... for that reason I've let my membership lapse'

David Lister
Arts News Editor

Mike Leigh, the film director given one of the industry's highest honours this week by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, revealed yesterday that he had resigned from the academy because of its failure to acknowledge his films for over 20 years.

In an exclusive interview with *The Independent*, the enigmatic and hugely talented creator of quintessentially British films also expressed for the first time his disappointment that his film *Secrets and Lies*, which won the Bafta best original screenplay and the Alexander Korda award for outstanding film of the year, had lost out so heavily at the Oscars to *The English Patient*.

But Leigh's real wrath was reserved for Bafta, the 50-year-old body, which comprises all the great and the good in the British film and television industries, and awards the British

equivalent of the Oscars each year.

Mike Leigh is unique in British film making. Working with equal success in movies, theatre and television, he has evolved a naturalistic and obsessively demanding relationship with specially selected troupes of actors evolving their characters and through them the scripts, and presenting an often depressing but equally often hilarious and poignant picture of contemporary Britain.

They range from the comic middle-class pretensions of suburbia in *Ai Gail's Party*, starring his estranged wife Alison Steadman, to his current triumph *Secrets and Lies*, the Oscar-nominated and Bafta-winning deeply affecting tale of a black girl's search for her natural mother who turns out to be white.

Despite his ever-growing fan base in Britain and abroad, the introverted Leigh has always considered himself an outsider in the industry, rightly resentful of the small number of cinemas his films often gain dis-

tribution to, and of the lack of establishment recognition of his work.

A clue that, despite the acclaim for *Secrets and Lies*, he might still feel this exclusion came at last Monday night's Baftas. The most memorable image of the occasion was beaming superstar Diana Ross underneath a plumage of purple hair presenting the top award to a solemn, unsmiling Leigh.

Speaking to the holder of the Bafta award for best British film yesterday it became clear why even in his greatest moment of triumph he was feeling just a little curmudgeonly and wore a hangdog expression.

With thinly disguised contempt for the British academy, he complained that until he became a hot Hollywood property this year, Bafta had never nominated a single one of his full-length films or television works.

Leigh revealed that he had resigned from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, which gave him three awards this week, because of what can only be described as his contempt for

the organisation. And he gave the first expression of his disappointment that *Secrets and Lies* had been so eclipsed by *The English Patient* at the Oscars.

Although Leigh would not criticise *The English Patient* himself, he did say that "many people in Hollywood" were surprised by the large number of prizes it had been giving and the blank drawn by his own film. Bafta, by contrast, awarded *Secrets and Lies* prizes for best British film, best original screenplay and best actress for Brenda Blethyn who played the white mother.

But Leigh said yesterday: "This was the first time anybody has ever had a Bafta award for anything in any of my films or television pieces. I have only ever had two nominations before and even those were for special short films. I can say nothing more eloquent than those facts. I leave everyone to form their own opinions on that."

"For that reason I let my membership lapse. When you get best di-

rector and best actor at Cannes [Leigh's film *Naked* won the Palme d'Or last year] and not even a nomination at Bafta, it was then I gave up. As somebody who has contributed fairly largely to the film industry, what that tells you about Bafta, well it doesn't need me to spell it out."

Even with three Bafta awards for his film, Leigh was loath to give the academy much credit for its good taste. "With the Oscar nominations, to have ignored *Secrets and Lies* would have been astonishing behaviour."

The lack of recognition for one of Britain's most successful, idiosyncratic and quintessentially British directors by the British film establishment does seem extraordinary. It is not only Bafta that has failed to recognise him. Earlier this year the Evening Standard Film Awards, decided by a jury of eminent film critics, ignored *Secrets and Lies* completely despite its Oscar nominations. The jury refused to consider him

for best screenplay as they claimed that his method of involving the cast with an evolutionary screenplay disqualified him. Ironically, best screenplay was one of the awards he picked up at Bafta.

The Oscars, Leigh admitted yesterday, proved a crushing disappointment for him. Nominated for five categories, his film won none, while *The English Patient* scooped nine.

Leigh said: "I actually quite like *The English Patient* and I like Tony Minghella [the director]. Of course, the famous night out at the Oscars when you have five nominations and walk away with nothing was not a nice night out for those of us involved with the film. It took our great sense of humour not to get pissed off."

"Many people in Hollywood said that *The English Patient* had got rather too much and we had got too little. But in the great scheme of things all the films that have taken awards are films that in the broad sense have intelligence and integrity."

Scientists find gene that built mighty mouse

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

It sounds like something from an Arnold Schwarzenegger science fiction film: bodybuilders of the future could be produced in the womb, rather than by steroids.

But a team of American scientists have produced genetically altered mice which would win their species' bodybuilding contests, by knocking out a gene involved in regulating muscle growth. They produced mice with unusually large shoulders, three times the muscle mass, which were a third larger than normal.

The finding by a team at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore - reported today in the science journal *Nature* - could have important implications both for humans, in offering treatments for wasting diseases like muscular dystrophy, and for



producing extra large farm animals such as cows, chickens and pigs without the use of chemical additives or hormones.

It is more likely that the farming uses would come first - rather than cloning has been done first with sheep rather than humans, because it involves the use of large numbers of embryo cells.

To produce the mice, the American researchers first took "stem cells" and disabled the gene called *GDF-8*, which codes for a growth-regulating chemical called myostatin.

The targeted stem cells were cloned and injected into normal embryos. After being transferred into the wombs of female mice, the altered embryos developed normally. But once they matured, the mutant mice had individual muscles up to three times the mass of regular mice, and pronounced shoulders and hips.

As well as having potential for the treatment of neuromuscular diseases, the scientists believe the approach might also yield benefits for cancer patients suffering severe weight loss.

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Holidays, PCs and DIY: savers rush to spend their share

Glenda Cooper
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

Savers are spending again. Thousands of people are treating themselves by blowing building-society windfall handouts on holidays, computers and doing up the home.

And the tourist industry has been quick to make their bid to benefit from the extra cash with two holiday firms launching their summer 1998 brochures tomorrow - before most people have even taken this year's break.

Nearly 15 million people are set to receive free shares from building societies changing into banks and which could be translated into cash payments aver-

aging £1,000. If everyone eligible sold all their shares this year, there would be an extra £20bn floating around the economy - equivalent to increased spending power of a 10p cut in the rate of income tax.

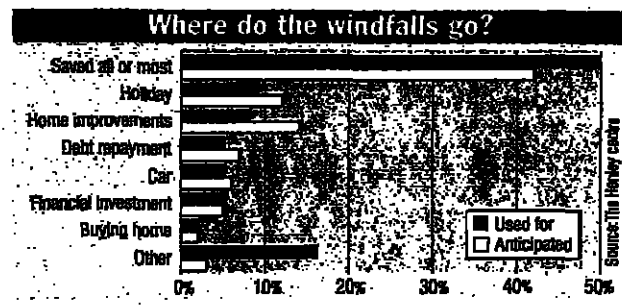
It is estimated that three in 10 people who received windfalls from the Alliance & Leicester windfalls, which has just floated on the stock market, have already sold their shares. The Halifax, the Woolwich and Northern Rock are all due to become banks as well over the next few months.

A report from the Henley Centre has found that while 50 per cent of those who received their windfalls saved them, only 42 per cent of those anticipat-

ing payouts would do so, with more people treating themselves to luxuries.

The independent market research company GfK said consumer confidence was up eight points on the same time last year, the first time it had shown a positive reading since 1988. People reported that they were now more likely to buy a car, buy a house and set about home improvements.

The upsurge in consumer confidence GfK put down to households benefiting from the windfall cash as well as falling unemployment, and tax cuts. "It doesn't look like people are going to spend large amounts of cash," said Dave Walker, associate director of GfK. "They



are more likely to buy washing machines or televisions or consumer durables. People are still a little bit nervous about their own situation and the general economic situation, particularly with the election."

Maevie Garaghty, associate director of the financial-services practice at the Henley Centre, said: "What is interesting is that those who had received their windfalls, a lot had saved them but those who anticipated getting them, the percentage of those intending to

save had dropped. Holidays and home improvements have particularly done well ... the majority of people were anticipating treating themselves."

One in eight say they are going to spend their money on holidays, a fact both Airtours and First Choice were quick to take advantage of. Last year the companies set a record by launching the following year's brochures in July, this year it is two months earlier.

"We have found that there is extremely strong demand from those who want to take advantage of the very large savings on offer," said Philippa Harris, marketing director of First Choice. "The success of the early brochure launch is borne out

by the growth of bookings that First Choice has seen for summer '97 up 21 per cent year on year." A likely area of growth which had not been picked up on was home computers, added Ms Garaghty, as many of their prices fell into the windfall range.

But Jason Whittaker, of the magazine *PC Advisor*, warned against buying a computer because the money was burning a hole in their pocket. "If you're buying a computer to use up £1,000 that is the worst reason to buy," he said. "If you don't know what you are going to be using it for then you can end up spending far more on the software and the support."

Major charities had considered targeting fundraising at windfalls but decided against it. Michael Dangerfield, the trust's major gifts manager for the Cancer Research Campaign said: "We did talk about it but we thought that would be going over the line." A spokeswoman for the National Trust added that "it would be a really good idea if one had the time and resources to pursue it". All the major charities said they had no evidence of an increase in giving due to windfalls. But Ms Garaghty said that despite good intentions and tempting offers, human nature would prevail. "The money may be frittered away on nothing in particular despite what people might like to do with it."

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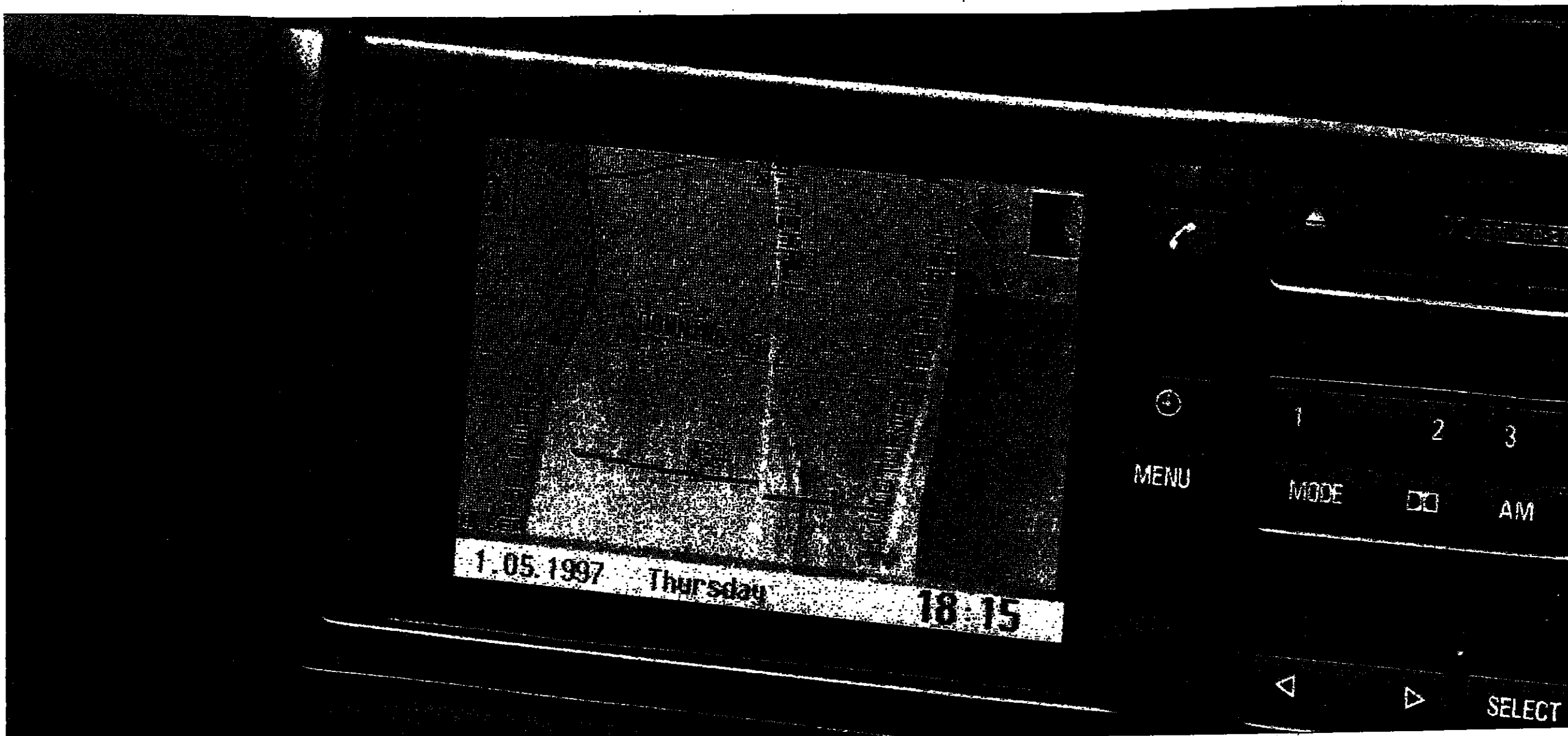
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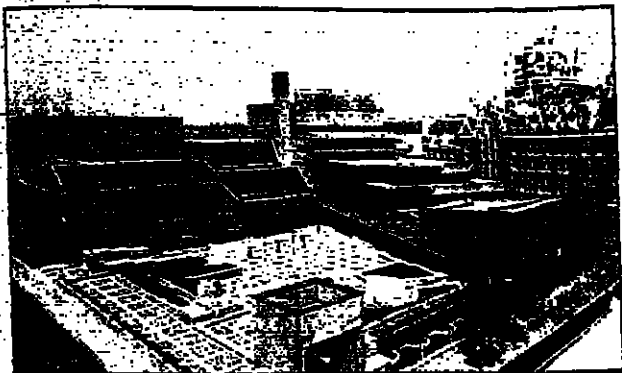


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Literati read riot act over admission fees



Shelf life: The British Library at St Pancras

British Library threatens to charge reading room users

David Lister
Arts News Editor

Literary London is presenting a unified front in opposing the possibility of having to pay to use the reading rooms at the new British Library.

The British Library yesterday issued questionnaires to its users asking their reaction to the possibility that it might for the first time in 250 years charge for access to its reading rooms.

The first reading room at the new St Pancras building opens this autumn. It will be the humanities reading room, the equivalent of the famous Round Reading Room at the British Museum.

Yesterday Brian Lang, chief executive of the British Library, said there was no current plan to introduce charges, and there was no possibility of charges being introduced in the near

future, as the last board meeting confirmed its support for the tradition of free access.

But he added: "In view of the very severe financial constraints under which the library is currently working and the uncertainty of future government grant in aid, the board requested the library management to conduct research into the subject without further delay."

The questionnaire proposes a range of annual charges for regular use of the British Library and asks users to indicate which prices they believe to be "reasonable", "expensive" or "so expensive that you would no longer visit the library".

The range extends from £50 a year to £700 a year, going up in £25 jumps. The research findings will be presented to the British Library board in July. The budget for the new St



Pancras building has risen from an original £116m to £511m.

Reaction among regular users showed that the research is likely to find a hostile attitude to charging.

Brian Lake, secretary of the Regular Readers Group, said

yesterday there had been no consultation with the group before putting out the questionnaire. He added that there would be international ramifications.

"If American academics are charged here, will the American

Library of Congress start charging people from Britain?" he asked. The historian Lord Thomas of Swynnerton said he was opposed to charging for regular usage. Ben Pimlott, biographer of the Queen and of Harold Wilson, has lent his

support to Mr Lake to oppose charging in talks with the library management.

The historian Lady Antonia Fraser, who has used the British Library reading room for 43 years, said: "I think that citizens of this country should unques-

tionably have their rights to visit freely great collections which have been built up for them."

The novelist Malcolm Bradbury said: "It is a world class research library. It should be available to scholars on the principle of their research."

Hands on: Weavers of the Edinburgh Tapestry Co manoeuvring their 22ft-sq work - based on the artist RB Kitaj's painting *Not, Not* - commissioned by the new British Library

Photograph: Tom Kidd

Pay to view: the price of progress

Mark Rowe

Charges for admission at many sites were stopped during the late 19th century when a popular consensus gathered pace that visits to places of culture and God should be free.

The case for charges at cathedrals was made in a Heritage and Renewal Report by Lady Howe which urged the richer cathedrals to raise more funds from visitors to help themselves and poorer sites.

However, a Which? report has roundly condemned charges at many sites saying they are too expensive and give poor value.

Five that charge

Victoria and Albert Museum: Introduced £5 admission charge for adults (£3 for OAPS, free for under-18s and students) in October, citing the "increasing seriousness of the Museum's financial position".

Westminster Abbey: Charges £4.50 to visit the Royal Chapel and Poets' Corner. Admission to cloisters and nave are free though four groups are charged £4 per head to enter the abbey. Considering a flat charge to control numbers which were around 2.5m last year.

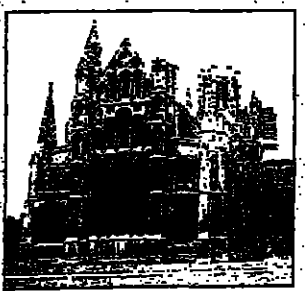
Ben Nevis: Highland Council has agreed to invite walkers who struggle up Britain's highest mountain as part of charity hikes to pay an unspecified amount. The mor-



V&A: New charges system



New Forest: Too congested



Ely Cathedral: £3 charge

ey would help fund guides for the increasing numbers of charity climbers, gather litter and clean toilets.

Ely Cathedral: Receives 101,000 visitors every year. Introduced charges 10 years ago: £3 for adults.

£2.20 concessions. "Charging has enabled us to break even," said a spokeswoman.

New Forest: 95 per cent of visitors go by car and the chronic congestion from the annual 9.5m vehicles has led to plans to introduce car parking charges. Plans have prompted protests by shopkeepers and villagers.

Five that are free

Royal Courts of Justice: Site of the High Courts and the Court of Appeal and home to more than 70 courts. Visitors will be subjected to a routine bag search.

National Gallery: Houses 2,000 paintings from 1260 to 1910 and receives five million visitors every year.

Giant's Causeway Centre: Bushmills. Closed in 1988 and now attracts 400,000 people each year. Displays on the history and geology of the peninsula, the giant, local legends and legends.

Hemlitch Court Gardens: Access to the gardens, all areas open to the public. Garden and the house, the popular garden in the county with a large conservatory.

York Minster: Visited by 2,250,000 people annually. Suggested donation is £2.

Inquiry told of doctor's fears over ecstasy girl

Jeremy Laurance

A surgeon strongly denied yesterday that she had refused a liver transplant on moral grounds to a teenager who had taken the drug ecstasy.

Dr Hilary Sanfey told a fatal accident inquiry into the death of Michelle Paul, 15, that her family had misunderstood the reasons for refusing her the £60,000 operation. However, she admitted that behavioural problems such as drug-taking had to be taken into account when considering which patients were suitable for transplant.

Dr Sanfey, 45, giving evidence on the fifth day of the inquiry at Aberdeen Sheriff Court, said she had met Michelle's mother and grandmother at the request of her colleague, Dr Niall Finlayson, who had told them that Michelle had suffered irreversible brain damage and was not suitable for transplant.

She said: "He told me the family were extremely anxious and had somehow got it into their heads that the decision was based purely on the basis of her behaviour and asked if I could come and clarify that and reinforce our position."

"The gran asked me why did Dr Finlayson say that we were



Dr Sanfey: Denies taking moral stance over transplant

not transplanting her because of her behavioural problems.

"I said she must have misunderstood what he said. I did say these were issues I would have to consider. I also said I've transplanted patients in the past who had taken ecstasy and that was not the reason in itself."

The doctor, who now works in the US, said the selection of patients for transplant was made by the whole team and it was "crazy" to suggest that she alone had the power to decide. She at first raised the possibility of Michelle having the operation but warned that she might suffer severe brain damage and the family could be faced with

having to switch off the ventilator in intensive care. "The gran interrupted and said it would not be what Michelle wanted. Although they were clearly distraught, they understood and were agreeing with me."

Michelle, died in November 1995, 23 days after taking half a tablet of ecstasy at a rave near her home in Aberdeen. Originally taken to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary with suspected hepatitis, she was later airlifted to Edinburgh when her condition deteriorated.

Dr Sanfey said she first saw Michelle on the morning after she was admitted to the Edinburgh hospital. She said she had noted the impression that the girl had an "extremely poor prognosis" and given her history of drug use and unstable family background - Michelle's mother and sister were known to use drugs - she should be excluded from transplantation.

However, she agreed with Dr Finlayson that they would seek further background information and review the situation. Within 24 hours, Dr Finlayson had met with her to express concerns over possible irreversible brain damage caused by severe pressure in her head.

The hearing continues.

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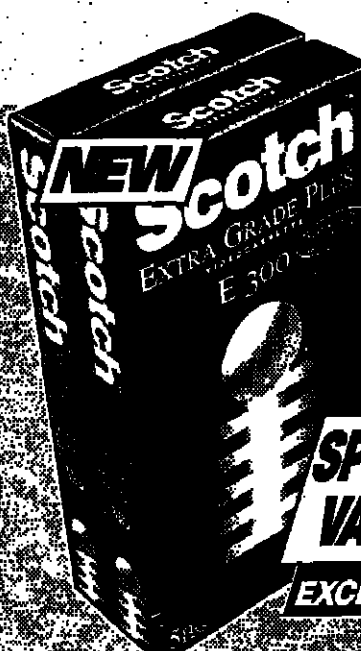


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Threats of violence as Maze talks stall

Warning from Loyalists in dispute over jail clampdown

David McKittrick
Ireland Correspondent

The dispute at Northern Ireland's Maze prison rumbled ominously on yesterday, with representatives of loyalist inmates failing to reach agreement with the authorities.

Several dozen prisoners affiliated to the paramilitary Ulster Defence Association are protesting against a tightening of security by the authorities. Explicit threats have been made by the parent group against the authorities.

Prisoners set fire to observation posts at the prison, which is situated several miles outside Belfast, while some clambered on to the roof of some of the "H-blocks".

More talks are to be held to-



Turning up the heat: Loyalist prisoners burning a look-out tower at the Maze yesterday as the Ulster Democratic Party's Gary McMichael and John White speak to inmates



Photographs: Kelvin Boyes

day. The threat of violence is being taken seriously, since at last three prison officers have been shot dead by loyalists over the years, and many more have been injured in the prison. A number involved in the protests

are regarded as particularly militant, including some serving sentences for murder.

UDA prisoners were disciplined by the authorities after refusing to co-operate with new measures, which include twice-

daily lock-ups, more headcounts and more random searches.

The loyalists claim they are being penalised for the behaviour of the IRA, since the clampdown was instituted following

the discovery of an IRA tunnel out of the prison.

Yesterday talks took place at Stormont Castle between senior civil servants and members of the Ulster Democratic party, headed by Gary McMichael.

The party's prison spokesman, John White, himself a former life prisoner at the Maze, said afterwards: "Unfortunately we were not able to resolve the situation. We put proposals on the table and we're having a meet-

ing tomorrow to continue our discussions. It means the demonstration will go on, unfortunately, but there is still the hope that tomorrow we may get some answers to some of the suggestions that we made."

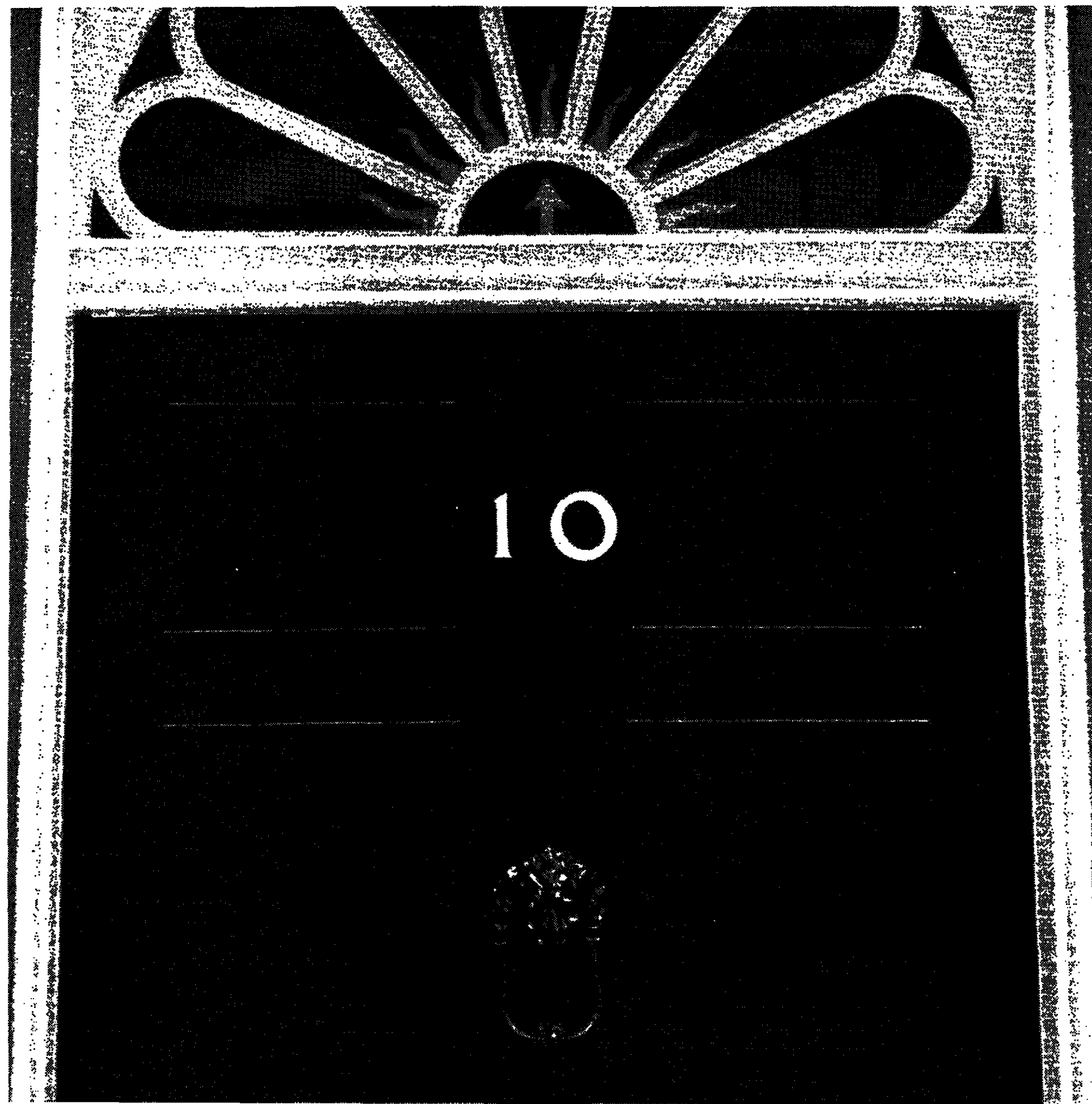
The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Patrick Mayhew, said: "There is no excuse for loyalist factions issuing threats to staff and I condemn this action unreservedly. The new measures are not a punishment for anyone, they are quite simply the very minimum that the public can expect to ensure the safety of staff and prisoners."

Meanwhile, Finlay Spratt, chairman of the Prison Officers Association, called for the res-

ignation of the prison administration, describing it as incompetent. He added: "It's the job of the authorities to run the jail, and it's our job to apply the rules, but this crisis has been brought about by an incompetent management and they should resign."

The UDA, using its cover-name of Ulster Freedom Fighters, warned that if riot squads were sent in they would ensure the authorities would "pay a price". It added: "The ball is with the prison authorities. They know how to bring this matter to an end." Yesterday several hundred people, most of them relatives of the prisoners involved, staged a demonstration outside the prison.

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Parents body attacked by charity bosses

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

The management and financial controls of England's largest and wealthiest parents' organisation are expected to be called into question by charity watchdogs in a report due out tomorrow.

Charity commissioners investigating the running of the National Council of Parent Teacher Associations will raise concerns including the propriety of employment by the charity of its own former trustees.

The report will also examine the spending of charity funds on legal advice following the sacking last November of two pro-reform trustees. Further inquiries are expected to follow.

The NCPA, which represents almost 12,000 schools and has a £750,000 annual income, has been rocked in recent months by a bitter internal dispute marking the culmination of years of in-fighting over its role and organisation.

Charity Commissioners launched an inquiry in February this year following complaints including allegations of junketing by members in expensive hotels. Concerns were also raised over alleged mismanagement, conflicts of interest and inadequate financial

controls within the charity.

The claims have been strongly contested by NCPA leaders.

Spokeswoman Margaret Morrissey earlier this year insisted the organisation could "defend itself to the hilt".

Turmoil within the NCPA came to a head late last year with the sacking of trustees Sandi Marshall and Sean Rogers, who was due to take over as chairman this month.

Both claim they were elected by the membership on a reformist platform to put the organisation on a more professional footing. They say they want to see more help for parents in schools at grass roots level, making better use of the charity's income and £1.2m savings.

They were removed by their fellow trustees for "bringing the organisation into disrepute" after a dispute with NCPA staff.

A chief executive appointed last year to run the charity following pressure from reformers left after three months and has not been replaced.

The Charity Commissioners, whose interim report will be discussed by NCPA members at an annual general meeting on Sunday, are expected to continue their investigations. Their ultimate sanction would be the removal of trustees.

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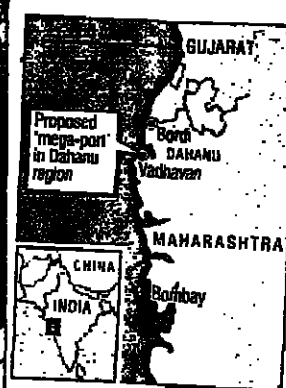
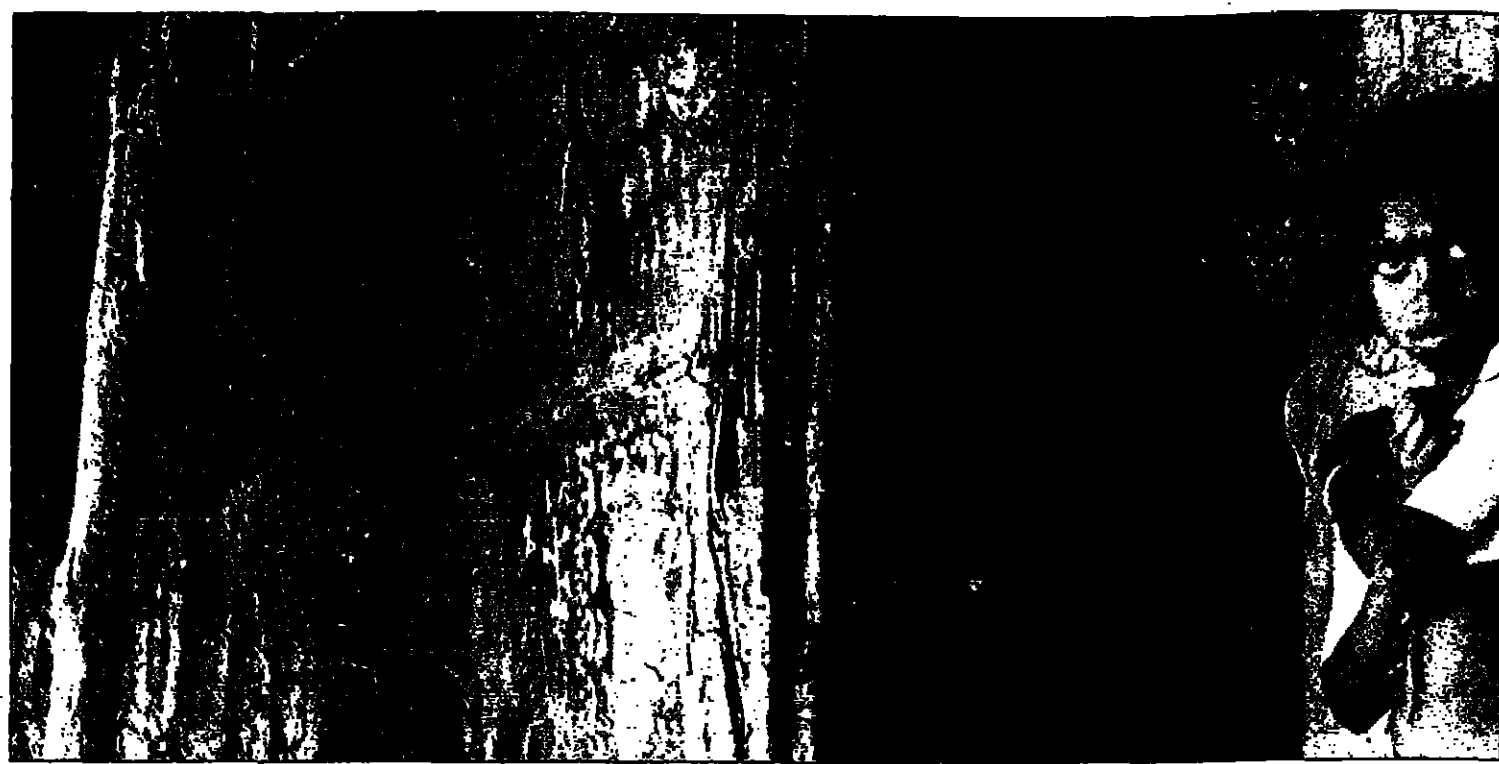
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Untouched by modern times, these tribal people find the might of P&O at their door



People in danger: Members of the Warli tribe from the Dahanu region of Maharashtra, India, whose unique way of life, unchanged for centuries, may not survive the building of a massive port in the heart of their region. Photograph: Images of India

P&O, one of Britain's biggest companies, is facing accusations from environmentalists that it is threatening the cultural survival of one of India's tribal peoples with plans for a massive port development on the subcontinent's west coast.

The Dahanu Warli tribe, who farm paddy fields in Maharashtra, remain unassimilated from the rest of India, keeping their own customs, religion and festivals. They live a simple life in huts made of wood, straw and cow dung. Unlike Hindus they eat beef, and unlike Muslims they eat pork.

Flower farms and tropical fruit orchards have given their homeland, Dahanu, a reputation as the "lungs of Bombay", and led to it being designated an ecologically fragile zone.

It is here P&O proposes to build a 29-berth port, capable

Ancient culture of India's Warlis threatened by mega-port. Ian Burrell reports

Nergis Irani, of the Dahanu Taluka Environment Welfare Association, said: "If P&O get the go-ahead, it will bring about the industrialisation of the whole area and the Warli way of life will be lost." She claimed the proposal breached central government directives designed to protect Dahanu from developers.

P&O is preparing its feasibility report for the port project, which requires approval from the Indian ministry of environment and forests. The company has paid almost £100,000 as security for its bid.

An international network of environmental groups, including The Body Shop, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, have taken an interest in the project. More extreme groups have talked of protest actions against P&O commercial cruise and ferry operations.

Richard Boehle, of Body Shop, said: "P&O will have to be very careful how they proceed with this project, or the plight of the Warli people could become as damaging to them as the struggle of the Ogoni people in Nigeria has become to Shell."

P&O, whose chairman is Lord Sterling of Plaistow, operates in 16 companies across five continents. It owns, or part owns, 53 ports, from Manila in the Philippines to Maputo in Mozambique.

Although P&O has worked in environmentally sensitive areas, like the Great Barrier Reef, where it manages a tourist centre, the Dahanu issue is a potential public relations disaster. Management has declined to comment publicly on criticism of the scheme, but company sources have defended their environmental record around the world and stress that it is working with local government officials to minimise any damage caused by the project.

In P&O literature, Lord Sterling writes: "We have a responsibility both as individuals and in our business activities to take into account the environ-

mental impact of all that we do." Sources point out that the construction of the Vadhavan port may create 1,000 jobs and the project would open the whole region up to economic development.

The British have built in Dahanu before. But they lived apart from the Warli villages, where a rich tribal culture had

evolved over many centuries. The Warlis developed their own form of painting on the insides of their huts, using a bamboo-stick as a brush and a paste made of tree gum, water and rice powder.

Dancing is central to Warli culture. Whole villages take part in a dance after the harvest to music from the sound of a

larpa, an instrument made from a dried pumpkin.

The 175,000 Dahanu Warlis, whose dark skin distinguishes them from other Indians, have lived for most of this century alongside Zoroastrian farmers who migrated to Dahanu after facing religious persecution in what is now Iran.

The Zoroastrians built wells

and water pumps and helped to create fruit orchards.

Dahanu now has a yearly production of 50,000 tons of the chickoo tropical fruit, 70,000 tons of fish and 5 million coconuts. Every month it produces 8,500 railway wagons of vegetables. Campaigners claim there is zero unemployment and say an improved water

supply could ensure the Warlis' self-sufficiency.

The threat to Dahanu first emerged a decade ago when the World Bank funded a project to set up a power station in the area to supply the urban sprawl of Bombay, 80 miles to the south.

The plan ran into a storm of protests from environmental campaigners who claimed it would pollute the region's last remaining green area.

A succession of court battles helped bring about the Dahanu Notification of 1991, in which the Indian ministry of environment declared the area "ecologically fragile" and banned changes in the pattern of land use or the transfer of tribal holdings. Environmentalists thought they had finally saved the region when the government identified Dahanu as the country's first "eco-tourist destination".

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Robert Taylor says the ideas and aims which clothe New Labour come from the Antipodes, not America. And that should worry us all. Only in The Spectator, out today.

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Nationwide FOOTBALL LEAGUE

news

An urban sanctuary for bears or cynical showbiz?

Clare Garner

Animal welfare campaigners yesterday condemned London Zoo's reintroduction of bears to its newly refurbished Mappin Terrace, which opens to the public on Saturday.

Bears have not been seen at the zoo in Regent's Park since the Mappin Terrace was closed 12 years ago because the historic buildings were deemed unsafe and in need of major structural repairs.

At a cost of more than £160,000, the site has been transformed into Bear Mountain, a 2,300 square metre enclosure billed as "the world's largest urban zoo playground". Gone are the stark concrete slopes and bars which dated back to 1913. In their place are ropes, trees, undergrowth and "toys" for the bears' entertain-



Bear necessities: London Zoo's new stars, a pair of Sloth bears, exploring London Zoo's newly refurbished Mappin Terrace yesterday

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

ment. Furthermore, London Zoo has introduced other species into the bears' enclosure in order to simulate natural conditions. They include muntjac deer, peacocks and a colony of leaf-eating monkeys. But the critics are not satisfied.

Jonathan Pearce, campaigns di-

rector for the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), described as "cynical" the zoo's importation of two Sri Lankan Sloth bears from Warsaw Zoo in Poland. Their real intention, he said, was not conservation, but to attract crowds. "They claim they are going to breed

them, but really it's just a drive to get a cute attraction," he said.

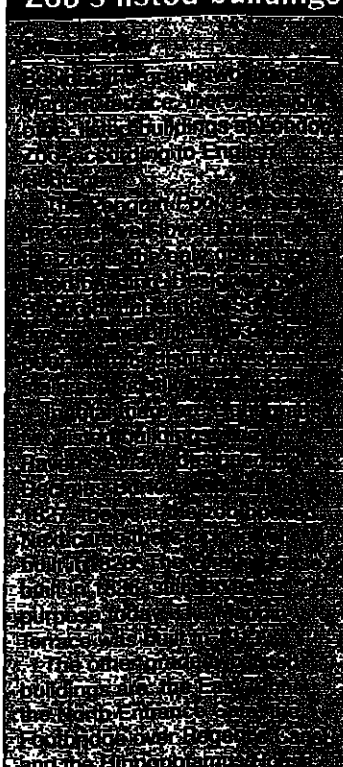
Dr Roger Mugford, an animal psychologist, insisted that however good the conditions, bears would always suffer in captivity. Dismissing the zoo's argument, he said: "London Zoo is totally about showbiz."

Had London Zoo really wanted to help with conservation, it should have turned Mappin Terrace into a bear sanctuary, according to Mr Pearce. The 12-year-old jet black Sloth bears, a male and a female - the only ones in the UK - which now live at Bear Mountain are expected to be "a

big hit among visitors". "Bears are incredibly popular with visitors and we are thrilled that they are now back at Regent's Park," said Dr Jo Gippis, director of London Zoo.

Doug Richardson, assistant curator of mammals at the zoo, said the enclosure was built to give the ani-

Zoo's listed buildings



mals the chance to develop their mental faculties. "Food is placed strategically at the top of a log or platform to encourage the bears to climb on to it. They have obstacles and they adore plastic toys, including a traffic cone," he said.

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No takers for third of training awards

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

Over a third of the Government's flagship job training qualifications have never been completed by a single trainee, according to figures from the quango set up to promote them.

A further 50 out of the 878 existing National Vocational Qualifications have been achieved by just one person.

Among the nation's least popular NVQs are level two qualifications in pest control, maintaining fire-extinguishing equipment, spectator control and funeral service, none of which has yet been awarded.

Certificates in amusements, carton manufacture and steel hot rolling have also yet to be gained.

The revelation that a total of 380 individual NVQs have been achieved by one person at the most casts doubt on government attempts to promote the qualifications as central to Britain's skills revolution.

Since their launch in 1990, £106m of public money has been spent on developing and promoting NVQs, which are based on the principle of measuring candidates' competence in particular job occupations.

The qualifications are under review after being criticised last year in a report on the 100 most popular awards by the industrialist Sir Gordon Beaumont. The Beaumont Report found NVQs were jargon-ridden, bureaucratic and needed revision to become more user-friendly. Critics have suggested the qualifications, which can be gained in the workplace or in colleges and training centres, are based on narrow job-descriptions, reducing their appeal and relevance.

The unpopularity of a large number of NVQs contrasts with the great popularity of a few.

Figures from the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) reveal that 23 awards have been completed by 5,000 or more trainees, while 91 have been gained by 1,000 or more trainees. The most popular NVQs cover business and service sector occupations including hairdressing, childcare and retail skills.

NCVQ yesterday said the figures on completed qualifications did not reflect the number of trainees who might be working towards them. That information is not collected centrally because the 120 NVQ awarding bodies do not agree on when to count a trainee as having embarked on a course.

A spokeswoman said there was a time lag between qualifications being accredited and the first person gaining a certificate while assessors were trained and other systems put in place.

Another factor was the high number of people opting to study only for sub-units of NVQs related to their particular occupation, rather than for the full qualification.

NCVQ admitted it was concerned at the low take-up where a qualification had been available for some time. The spokeswoman said: "We will consider carefully whether these NVQs should stay in the system when they come to be re-accredited and we will tighten our criteria for deciding whether there is a market for new ones."

NVQs make up a fraction of the 16,000 vocational qualifications available. As a result of criticism, the Government has ordered a big reduction in the list of qualifications eligible for public funding.

DAILY POEM

A Good Read

By Tony Harrison

That summer it was Ibsen, Marx and Gide.

I got one of his you-stuck-up-bugger looks:

ah sometimes think you read too many books.
ah niver 'ud much time for a good read.

Good read! I bet! Your programme at United!
The labels on your whisky or your beer!
You'd never get unbearably excited
poring over Kafka or King Lear.
The only score you'd bother with's your darts,
or fucking football ...

(All this in my mind.)

I've come round to your position on 'the Arts'
but put it down in poems, that's the bind.

These poems about you, dad, should make good reads
for the bus you took from Beeston into town
for people with no time like you in Leeds -

once I'm writing I can't put you down!

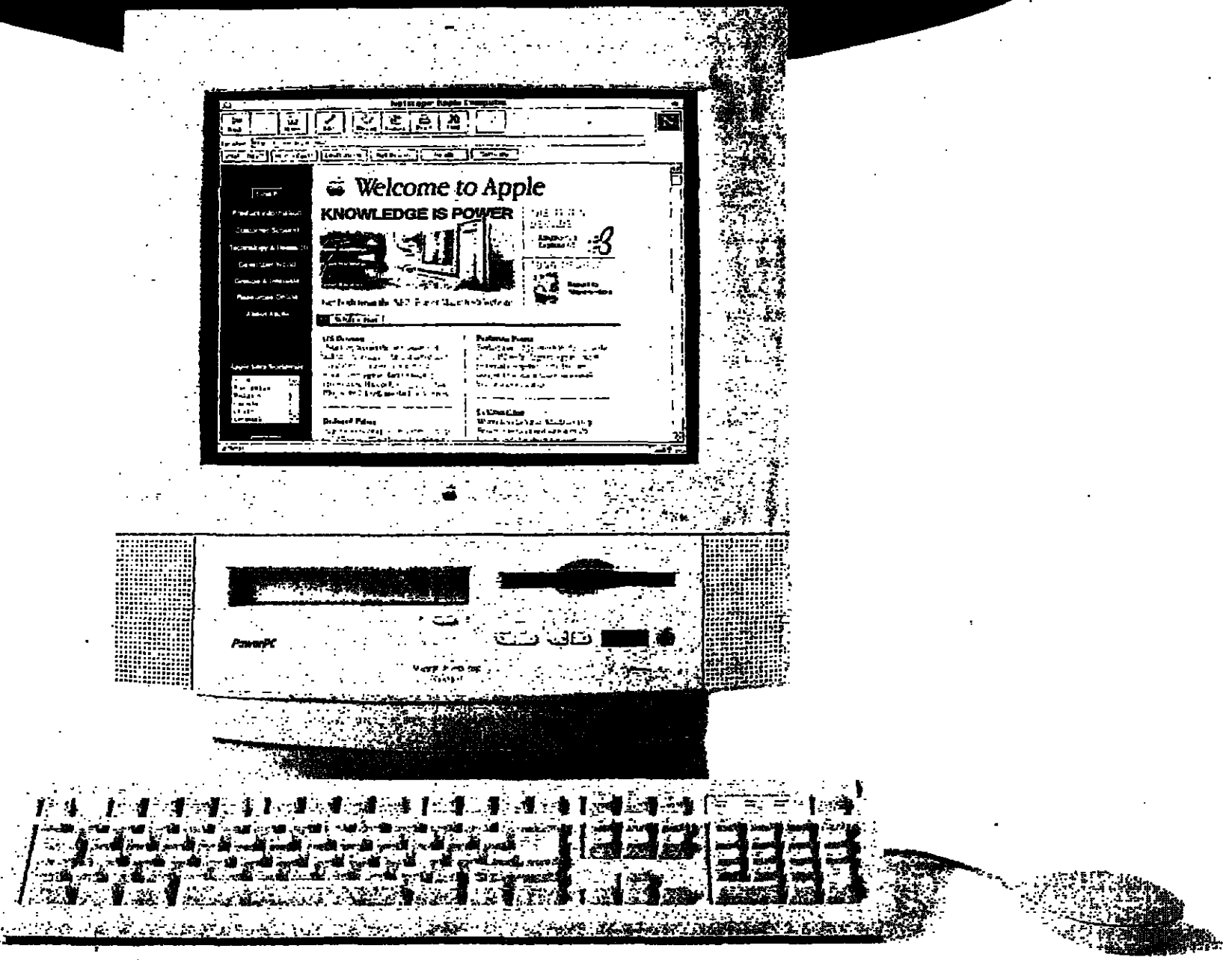
This poem, from the sequence read this week on Radio 3 by Tony Harrison to mark his 60th birthday, can be heard tonight at 00.30. All the works chosen come from his *Selected Poems* (Penguin, £6.99) ©Tony Harrison

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Always read the small print, before you buy.

Some computer manufacturers offer you "the latest technology" at unbeatable prices, others include "hundreds of pounds worth of software" valued at more than the cost of the whole system. Unbelievable? We agree. And if you share our concerns, look no further than the Macintosh Performa™ range – now starting at just £1,199 (£1,020.43 ex VAT)*.

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And whilst we're on the subject of deals, make sure you ask your nearest stockist about special offers that are now available when you also buy an equally honest Colour StyleWriter™ printer.

For details of a Macintosh Performa stockist near you, call the Apple Information Centre free on: 0800 234 800.



*Suggested retail price of the Macintosh Performa 5400/160 (Family Macintosh) as at 1/5/97. Ex VAT pricing shown for business customers only. © May 1997, Apple Computer, Inc. The Apple logo is a registered trade mark and Apple, Macintosh, Macintosh Performa and StyleWriter are trademarks of Apple Computer, Inc., registered in the US and other countries. All other trademarks are recognised as belonging to their respective parent companies.

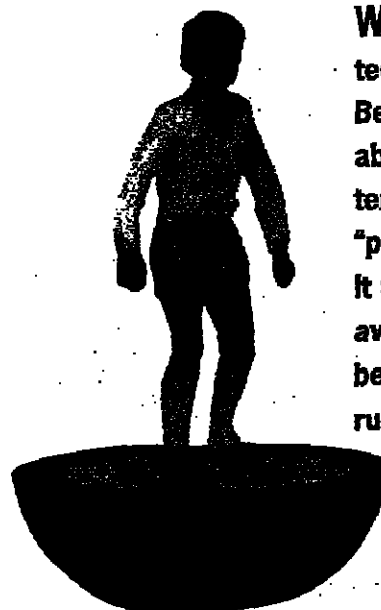
Every day, another 90,000 people log onto the internet for the first time.

They can't all be canonically insomniac undergraduates, so just how difficult can it all be?

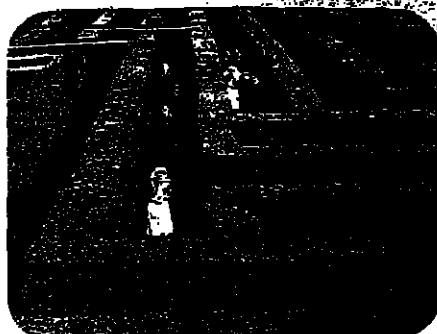
The short answer: not very.

And the long answer? Not very, read on.

An easy way to get started is to visit the Yell® website. You'll find it at <http://www.yell.co.uk>.



WARNING: this is a highly technical treatise on the internet. Before reading it, you should be able to understand complicated terms such as "Yellow Pages", "plumber", "Polish" and "hotel". It is designed to be read by the average 59-year old human being. If there isn't one handy, rush out now and grab one before you go any further. You have been warned.



On Yell, you'll find Electronic Yellow Pages® (the on-line version of, you guessed it, Yellow Pages®), a film guide, a city guide and one or two other things, all arranged in a way that makes them easy to use.

EYP® (as we like to call Electronic Yellow Pages) is the comprehensive on-line source of information about businesses in the country. It includes the names, addresses, telephone numbers (and of course business type) of over 1.6 million companies.

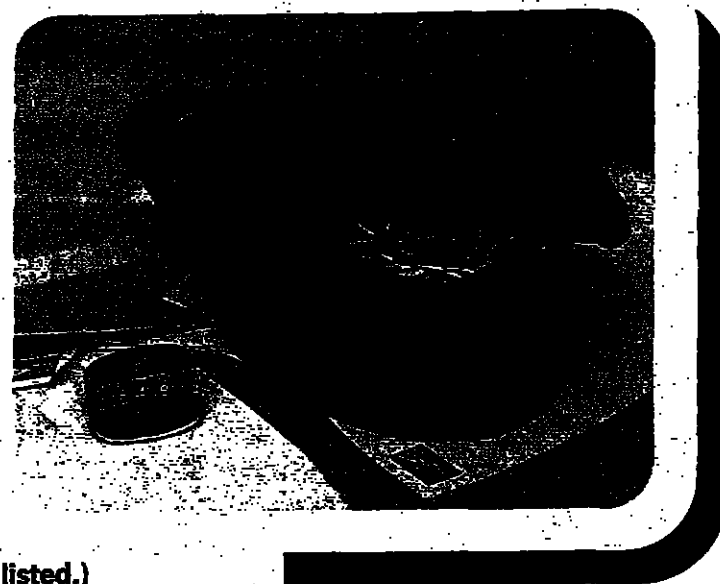
Which is obviously rather a lot to look through when you need a horse breeder in a hurry. So something called a search engine does everything for you.

Should you be looking, it can also find you eight plumbers around Leek, two demolition experts in Wrexham and for "Boring" it will tell you to look under Civil Engineers.

With some businesses, you can click on the company's name and a hyperlink (a technical term for, well, a link) will transfer you out of Yell and take you to their home page. (To be any easier, we'd have to come and do it for you.)

Here you may find photographs of their staff and products, a map showing you where to find them and an address so you can send them an e-mail. (Don't worry if you're still using something as quaint as a telephone, the number is also listed.)

But there's much more than just good old Yellow Pages on good new Yell.



Yell, the website of yellow pages. Search engines, hyperlinks, web directories and for people over the age of seven, a button marked "help".

The film guide has news, reviews and a search facility. For example, if you want to find out about 1930's Polish cinema, you're probably a film geek. The good news is you don't have to be an internet geek as well.

Yell's Film Finder has a directory of World Cinema sites and one of those search engines to help find the film you're looking for.

And "What's On Stage" will let you do the same for the theatre, darling.

The Guides section has London's newest exhibitions, the best restaurants and reviews of whichever bar is 'in' at the moment (it's updated every month). Luckily, there's also a hotel guide in case you miss your last train home.

Of course, there's still one thing we haven't mentioned. But now that you've used the search engines, checked out the web directories and jumped down hyperlinks, what in the World Wide Web could you possibly want with a little button marked "HELP"?

On-line shopping. It's just like the real thing, except you can't squeeze the vegetables.



Electronic Yellow Pages has 164 horse breeders and dealers.



The website of Yellow Pages. <http://www.yell.co.uk>



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251 من الامم

Steve Boggan aboard 'Blairforce One' reports on the last day of the Labour campaign

... We are going to lose tomorrow, John, because we
... that message across, we have not woken up in

Labour lead stays rock-solid to the end

John Rentoul

Tony Blair is set to become prime minister tomorrow, with Labour still 17 points ahead in the final *Independent*/Harris poll. But the pollsters remain jittery about predicting the precise margin of victory.

Tom Simpson, managing director of Harris Research, has estimated what might happen if people behave the way they did at the last election, and suggests Labour's lead in the real vote today could be cut to 11 points.

Although all the polls, apart from MORI, adjust the don't know and won't say to take account of Conservative supporters who are reluctant to declare themselves, Mr Simpson said: "We can't be sure we've got all of them this way, so we've made a stronger adjustment on the basis of what happened last time."

He assumes a late swing on the same scale as in 1992. Applying this adjustment to today's poll cuts Mr Blair's majority of 173-179 seats to around 99.

But the evidence from the poll itself suggests that Labour's

THE INDEPENDENT HARRIS POLL

Which party do you trust most to take the right decisions about...? (1992 NOP/BBC exit poll in brackets)

	The economy	Income tax	Prices and inflation
Labour	49 (35)	45 (32)	46 (33)
Conservative	34 (51)	35 (53)	39 (53)
Lib Dem	10 (14)	15 (15)	10 (14)

vote is solid. While 81 per cent of Labour supporters said they had "definitely decided" how to vote, only 68 per cent of Tory voters were sure.

Of Tories, 23 per cent said: "I may change my mind", against 33 per cent of Liberal Democrats and only 13 per cent of Labour supporters. The second preferences of Tory waverers tilt towards the Liberal Democrats, while those of Liberal Democrats split nearly three-to-one in Labour's favour.

We asked which party voters trusted most to take the right decisions in five areas and found Labour ahead in each one.

On the economy, income tax and prices (see table), our questions are directly comparable with those asked by NOP in the BBC's exit poll at the last election. Labour's rating is 13 or 14 points higher than in 1992, and the Tories are between 14 and 18 points lower.

Labour was also ahead by 16 points on law and order and by 12 points on Europe. When Harris asked about the impact of the European Union as an election issue, 24 per cent said it made people less likely to vote Conservative, against 16 per cent who said it made people more likely to do so.

Harris also asked: "What is the one most important reason for supporting the party you intend to vote for?"

This is comparable to a question Harris asked in its exit poll for ITN in 1992, and the answers are very similar. "The party's policies" were named by 45 per cent (47 per cent in 1992); "I usually vote for that party," 20 per cent (20); "Dislike of another party," 15 per cent (15); "The party leader," 7 per cent (7); "The local candidate," 4 per cent (5).

Finally, Harris asked what people thought of the "new" Labour Party. Half the sample, 49 per cent, said the changes show Tony Blair "is a strong leader with a clear sense of direction". Of Conservative voters, 23 per cent also thought that Mr Blair was a strong leader. Harris Research interviewed 1,154 adults face-to-face in their homes on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday this week. The figures exclude 14 per cent who didn't know, wouldn't say or wouldn't vote, who could not be allocated to a party on the basis of how they voted in 1992.



Star of 45: If polls are right Tony Blair will match Clement Attlee's rout of the Tories

Photograph: Hulton Getty

Poll leads raise spectre of the rout of 1945

John Rentoul

Only twice this century have the Conservatives been routed on a scale suggested by today's opinion polls.

In 1945, the Tories were reduced to just 213 MPs. Labour, led by Clement Attlee, won 393 seats and a majority of 146. But six years later, the Labour Government was out of power.

In 1906, the Tories were cut to 157, with the Liberals under Henry Campbell-Bannerman winning by a margin of 130 seats. The Tories were out of power until the wartime coalition of 1915.

If today's *Independent*/Harris poll reflects how people vote, Labour would have a majority of 177 and the Tories would be left with 184 seats.

Tony Blair said on Monday: "This is not a landslide country." He could not be more wrong. For the purposes of tonight's electronic swingometer, the BBC has defined a landslide as a majority of 100 seats or more. On this definition, nine of this century's 25 general elections have been landslides.

Apart from the Liberals in 1906 and Labour in 1945, the remaining seven have all been Tory victories. The Marquis of Salisbury won a majority 134 in the 1900 "khaki election" during the Boer War. Stanley Baldwin won a majority of 223

in 1924, the election which saw the demise of the Liberal Party.

The Tories had a notional majority of 331 in 1931, although Ramsay MacDonald was Prime Minister of the National Government, which itself had a majority of 493. Mr Baldwin was back with a majority of 249 in 1935. Harold Macmillan also had a majority of exactly 100 in 1959. Harold Wilson in 1966 was just short with a 96 majority. And then Margaret Thatcher won by 144 in 1983 and 102 in 1987.

What is intriguing is that both the 1906 and 1945 anti-Tory landslides marked new beginnings in the country's political history. The 1906 Liberal Government levied progressive taxation to pay for the start of the welfare state, including the introduction of the old age pension.

The 1945 Labour Government built the "cradle to grave" welfare state (to a blueprint by the Liberal Sir William Beveridge), including the National Health Service.

Tory landslides, on the other hand, have tended to be endorsements of what went before. The Tories won the 1979 election, which marked the beginning of the Thatcher revolution, by a majority of 45 seats, and only went on to win landslides later.

Businessman rebuffs claim on donations

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

Paul Sykes, the millionaire businessman who has given £500,000 to local Conservative parties whose candidates oppose the single currency, has rebuffed suggestions that his donations would jeopardise their parliamentary future.

Mr Sykes, who is firmly opposed to the single currency and federalism, has exacerbated divisions within the Tory party by giving between £1,000 and £5,000 to areas with a sitting Tory MP. The money has been taken up by 237 associations, costing Mr Sykes about £500,000, but he argues that suggestions that he gave the money to candidates are wrong.

He said yesterday: "The money was given to constituency associations and not candidates, and we checked the situation legally very carefully before making the donations."

Mr Sykes yesterday issued a writ against the *Guardian* for libel after it ran a story saying: "This man gave money to 237 Tories. They may regret it."

Mr Sykes is demanding a retraction and an apology and warned that he was prepared to pursue it all the way. "I hope they give in, because I don't want to cause any job losses at the paper," he said. He also demanded the resignation of the editor, Alan Rusbridger.

It is unclear whether Sir Gordon Downey, the Commission for Parliamentary Standards, is likely to receive a complaint about the donations when Parliament resumes. If so, he may be asked to produce a report for



Paul Sykes: Issued libel writ

the Commons Standards and Privileges Committee to decide whether they contravene rules issued 18 months ago by Parliament following the cash-for-questions affair.

Labour was officially playing down the story because it did not want Europe to become an issue on the day of polling. However, individual MPs or members of the public will be able to table a complaint after the election to Sir Gordon.

It is not certain whether the donations breached the rules, which say members should not take payments for speaking in the House on a particular issue, nor can MPs enter into any "contractual arrangement which fetters the Member's complete independence in Parliament by any undertaking to press some particular point of view on behalf of an outside interest." Mr Sykes argues that these MPs already held single currency views before and that they did not benefit personally from the donation.

REPAIR MANUAL

M Registration Cars



TOYOTA COROLLA

1st

REPAIR MANUAL

M Registration Cars



VW GOLF

48th

Once again the BBC Top Gear/JD Power survey speaks volumes.

No prizes for guessing which car came top in the BBC Top Gear/JD Power and Associates 1997 UK Customer Satisfaction Study. Drivers of all the leading makes were asked questions covering vehicle performance, number of problems experienced and customer care. And, for the fourth year running, the world-beating Toyota Corolla was rated the UK's single most satisfying car by the most important judges of all - the car owners. And the runner up was the stunning Toyota Celica. To quote from the report "Vehicle quality is the outstanding strength - Toyota owners report fewer problems on average than owners of any other make." No surprise, then, that they voted both the car in front and the one behind it a Toyota.

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صندوق البريد

Labour's power handover

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

Civil servants are already preparing for new masters

The transfer of power after a British general election is painfully public for the loser. Assuming the polls are right, which would be in the middle of the night, the first official move will be made by the Prime Minister's private secretary, Alex Allan, who will ring up his counterpart at the Palace to make an appointment for Mr Major to tender his resignation.

The meeting will probably take place in late morning, and Mr Allan will stay for a cup of tea to await the arrival of Mr Blair. Mr Major, who arrived in his official car, will leave in the back of a vehicle, probably to spend the weekend in Huntingdon. Meanwhile, Mr Blair will arrive in his leader of the opposition's car, see the Queen - no kissing of hands, according to official sources - and

leave as almost the prime minister. The official appointment does not come until a meeting of the Privy Council, probably held on Saturday evening, at which the new Cabinet will be given their seals of office.

The flat upstairs at No 10 is furnished and the Majors will have put their chattels into store, leaving it in the sort of

condition you would expect to find a holiday flat - except that it has no cutlery. This should not be too much of an immediate problem because the Majors will continue living in Islington for the next few weeks, before moving into the four bedroomed flat "above the shop".

Mr Blair's first task will be to appoint the Cabinet and the first

appointments are expected to be announced tomorrow night. Then there will be the 60 or 70 junior posts. It will be a difficult weekend for the leading lights among MPs who will be sitting by their phones waiting for the call from Mr Blair's office.

The civil servants view a successful transfer of power as the biggest challenge of their ca-

reers. There have, already, been extensive preparations with shadow ministers being allowed to see permanent secretaries since January last year with Mr Major's blessing. Neil Kinnock apparently found these meetings so valuable that he wanted to ensure that Mr Blair was able to take advantage of them. Mr Kinnock wrote to Mr Major after his defeat to ask if shadow ministers could have early access to ensure that they would not miss out should there have been a snap poll.

All departments have produced large briefs for new ministers and civil servants have also made plans for the new Department of International Development promised in the Labour manifesto. The Department of Education has also bought equipment and prepared a team of readers as David Blunkett, who is blind, has been promised the job should Labour win.

New administration plunges in to hectic schedule

Following the six-week election campaign, the really hard work begins - once the Prime Minister has formed and announced his administration.

The diary then begins to look hectic: Monday 5 May: Start of two-day meeting of the European Union's inter-governmental conference, in Strasbourg, on preparation for Amsterdam summit in June.

Wednesday 7 May: Formal re-election of Commons Speaker - Betty Boothroyd.

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, 7, 8, 9 May: Swear-

ing in of new MPs. After early rush, a steady flow of MPs will swear (or affirm) an oath of allegiance to the Queen until the Commons is adjourned for the State Opening.

Thursday 8 May: The first Cabinet meeting, to agree contents of Queen's Speech legislative programme for the year.

Monday 12 May: Chancellor of the Exchequer attends Ecofin council in Brussels on European Monetary Union.

Wednesday 14 May: The official State Opening of Parliament, with Queen's Speech.



by Anonymous

While most of Britain slept or made love - their quiddian dreams and sighs floating up to heaven - our characters were keeping the watches of the night.

Nipper - exhausted - had listened to the midnight bulletin, set his pager to "vibrate" and put it under his pillow. Apart from a vague, unlocated randomness, he was now hardly a corporeal being at all. Each step of his shining career had been accompanied by such a moment of pure intellectual calm. From school to university, from university to leader's office - and now - from leader's office to Number 10. He turned twice on his futon, and was asleep.

Queen Mum lay half awake in the hotel room, her sub-conscious tyrannised - like the mother of a boy to be bar-mitzvahed the next day - with arrangements. Timetables, microphones, stewards, piranhas, secret service barriers floated around her poor head. As well as that odd sense of loss, which - had she been fully awake, she might have realised - stemmed from the fact that, in victory, she was probably losing the Candidate forever. For on Friday morning and ever after, others - smoother and more practised - would have the charge of him.

London E5. Whizz was alone in the large bed, his other half far off in the North, from where she would shortly be sent as the youngest MP in the House of Commons. They had spoken at midnight on the telephone, a strangely tender and wistful conversation, both aware that their lives would never be the same after tomorrow, and that the change - which they had sought so earnestly - might not all be good. As soon as her voice was gone, Whizz - out of habit - had called Mr Brown in Scotland. But there was little more for them to say. Now Whizz was trying to capture sleep by conjuring up images of his new desk at the Treasury, the meetings of eggheads who would put the world to rights, and the seminars he would address at Harvard. Sleep thus invited, duly arrived.

Three hundred miles away a sleepless Mr Brown sat in an armchair, a glass of whisky on the table beside him, and - by the light of a stan-

dard lamp - jotted down yet more notes (to add to the tomes he had already written) for his first Budget speech. It would be a better.

Auntie, in the room next to Queen Mum's, climbed into her nightgown, cleaned her teeth, plumped up her pillow and - after a brief reflection that she had done all she could, and that it all

felt far better than five years ago - fell into a deep dreamless sleep.

Bobby's sleep, however, was far from dreamless. His night mind was peopled by feather-hatted governors-general and sashed ambassadors, furnished with spacious offices and beautiful paintings. History books fell open to reveal his photograph and to tell of great ministrations and reforms.

Mrs Candidate called the nanny at 11pm, to make sure that all was well at home. The kids were fast asleep, and she had pictured them as they must have been, breathing gently - their eyelids trembling as they sailed the high seas with pirates or got into trouble with surreal head-masters. To her tired irritation her last waking thoughts had strayed again to curtains and carpets. Then she was asleep.

As dawn rose in the small village, and the first light leaked into the room, she laid an arm over her husband's side of the bed - where it flopped onto the empty sheet.

The Candidate looked out onto the dewy lawn, over whose wet length a few wisps of mist were drifting. By the light he judged that it was shortly after 4am, the first birds began calling from the trees at the end of the garden. He had woken half an hour earlier, not with a start, but simply as though it was now time - early as it was - for his day to begin. Taking care not to wake his wife, he had slipped downstairs in his blue pyjamas, poured himself a glass of Badoit from the fridge, and come to stand at this window to watch this day begin.

He was not, he knew, a particularly humble man. People had usually thought well of him, and he had always supposed that they must have a point. But today really was his date with destiny. From leading a party - a tricky thing to be sure - he would be going to running a nation. So he stood there by the window, as the sun rose, and prayed. Not for victory, but for wisdom.

He stood and prayed. Not for victory, but for wisdom



Guardian of democracy: Peggy Saich, a local government employee who is acting as a presiding officer in Saffron Waldon, Essex, standing over the ballot box that she - like many others in rural constituencies - will look after overnight in her home

Astrologers chart cosmic encouragement for Blair

Kim Sengupta

John Major may as well stay in bed today. It's not just the pollsters who are predicting a disaster, he also faces a cosmic meltdown. The Prime Minister could not have chosen a

worse time to call the election, according to the astrologers. He has played right into Tony Blair's Venus ascendant. Unless the stars are wrong, it will be a Labour government leading Britain into the new millennium. Paddy Ashdown cannot expect

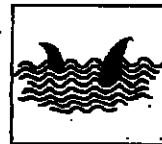
much immediate change from today. But for him things can only get better. He may yet find himself part of a Lib-Lab coalition, because although the stars are favouring Mr Blair at the moment, he may have problems with his backbenchers in the future.



John Major
(Aries.
Born 29
March
1943)



Tony Blair
(Taurus.
Born 6
May 1953)



Paddy Ashdown
(Pisces.
Born 27
February)



"It is quite obvious that the Prime Minister did not take astrological advice when setting the election date," said astrologer Jonathan Cainer, who writes a horoscope column for the *Daily Mail* and magazines such as *Woman* and *Prima*. "If he had he would have known that this was precisely the wrong time to call it. Tony Blair must feel it is a gift from heaven which has landed in his lap."

"Both Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan took astrological help when making important decisions, and the longevity of their political lives show this was hardly a foolish thing to do."

1 May is in Mr Blair's sign of the zodiac, Taurus, and the Sun is also there at the moment. Mr Cainer says Mr Major should have gone to the polls towards the end of last year, when the stars were much more benign for him.

The stars are shining bright on the Labour leader at the moment. Venus, the ruler of Taurus, is in his star sign, and so is Mercury, the planet of communications and commerce. And Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* is not the only one backing Mr Blair, the planet by the same name is also in Taurus.

Jonathan Cainer said: "This is undoubtedly a very auspicious time for Mr Blair. Mr Major has given him the advantage by the timing of the election. But the Labour leader has a particularly good planetary situation as well."

But there could be trouble ahead. Mr Cainer said that for Taurus "Jupiter's sharp link to Venus is a classic cosmic warning. You are in danger of getting too much of a good thing. You may soon have to pay a high price for a source of pleasure".

Tony Blair's problems with Bolshie backbenchers could get Mr Ashdown the Cabinet post he covets. There are also strong planetary connections between the charts of the two men - the Sun and the Moon when Mr Blair was born, to the Leo ascendant in Mr Ashdown's Pisces.

Nicholas Campion said: "Obviously the chances of the Lib Dems winning the election are about as great as Elvis Presley landing a flying saucer on top of the Loch Ness monster. But he could end up with a job in government. There are strong planetary links between the two men. There need not even be a hung Parliament for Ashdown to get involved. The two men should work well together."

Jonathan Cainer said: "Over the next few months (Ashdown) will find himself going through a period of renewal which proves immensely beneficial."

Candidates lost among the junk mail

Nicholas Schoon

In one of the safest Tory wards in a safe Tory constituency, the election simply has not registered. Nary a sign of a canvasser, let alone a candidate, and only one window poster in our street - for the Referendum Party.

The long, grinding struggle for votes has been conducted solely in the media as far our household is concerned.

No battle bus has passed through Bromley, that most suburban of outer south London

boroughs, and only one candidate's debate has been held, organised by the local Council of Churches. Not being church-goers we never heard about it, and the Conservative candidate, Euro-sceptic Education minister Eric Forth, did not attend.

Derek Hamon, the Tory agent in the constituency since 1965, said that public meetings were now history. "We used to hold them but we stopped at the last election because only half a dozen people would turn up. We used to book small halls and

have about 30 party workers there to make up the numbers." Labour's candidate for the Bromley and Chislehurst seat, Rob Yeldham, said the Post Office had delivered 300 of his election addresses in the wrong constituency. "They've said they would put matters right, but I've no way of knowing if they have."

The Liberal Democrat constituency agent, Michael Titor, said that by now the Schoon household should have had three leaflets from his party, two delivered by the Post Office and

one by hand. But he is concerned about the Royal Mail being slow to deliver in some wards.

Mr Hamon, for the Tories, said: "I find it quite incredible that you've had no leaflet and rather disturbing. We've fought a very vigorous campaign here."

Mr Titor said: "I think we are in danger of getting lost among the junk mail." He agrees with Mr Hamon that it has been difficult to engage Bromley man and woman during the long campaign. "Trying to interest people has been an uphill struggle."

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Fig. 2. Lemon Golf is not always won by the expert golfer!

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Dejected Tory: Margaret Curtiss relaxing at home in Southampton yesterday after accusing John Major of betraying the country Photograph: Robin Jones

Major stands accused of complacency

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

John Major was publicly rebuked yesterday by a die-hard Tory activist who accused him of complacency and, ultimately, betrayal for leaving his party without the weapons to fight the election.

The onslaught – the more powerful because it came from someone clearly moved by her expectation of imminent defeat – was delivered on the final BBC *Election Call* by Margaret Curtiss, of Southampton, where the Conservatives expect to lose one marginal seat.

But Mr Major built on the alibi he had first delivered on

Tuesday, that the media was obstructing his message and blocking his appeal to the voters.

No stranger to controversy, Mrs Curtiss featured in a front-page *Sunday Mirror* report about Southampton Tory sleaze in March. Yesterday, she cornered Mr Major with a grassroots view of her party's plight.

Accusing him of complacency, she said: "As far back as 1993, the party were well aware that the posts had changed, and yet we had minister after minister coming down to Southampton saying, 'Well, we have done it before, we can do it again'."

"You know yourself that to govern effectively, you need people not only at the top, but people on the ground floor."

"We have lost very, very many fine councillors over the years through this failure to get our message across, this utter complacency, and ultimately that means that it's a betrayal of the country, as we both know that only the Conservatives can really be truly trusted to govern the country."

"But we are going to lose tomorrow, John, because we have not got that message across. We have not woken up in time to the fact those goalposts have moved and the Labour Party have been a different animal, and that ultimately has to rest at your door."

Initially, Mr Major said he was not complacent, council seats had not been pulled out and messages had not been delivered to the voters.

She told the Prime Minister: "You have plenty of eager soldiers on the ground floor here. We have been begging for you to give us the weapons to fight. We have not had those weapons."

"We have been going on with one hand tied behind our back... The buck has to stop somewhere and that does stop at you and I'm very sorry we're going to lose tomorrow."

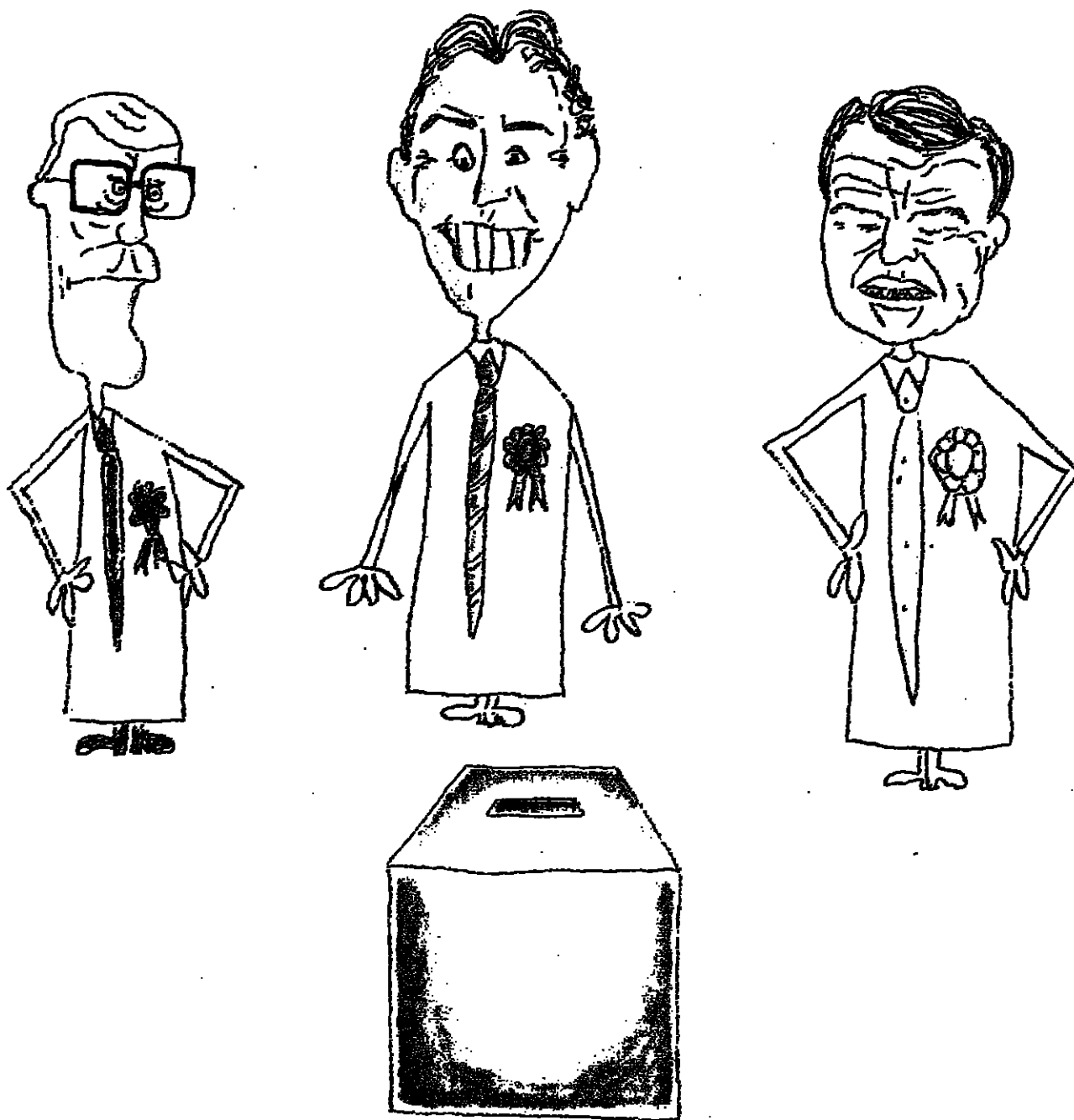
Mr Major said: "There is a problem in politics these days. However, whatever politicians may say, the message the politicians get is filtered through what happens to be the story of the day. I may speak at length about the details of education

policy, but if that happens not to be on the agenda of the day of the media and others, you hear very little about it."

"You hear about the squabble of the day, the disagreement of the day, the gaffe of the day, the speculation of the day, the poll of the day, but the details of how I propose to improve education, what I propose to do to the failing Labour education authorities in the next Parliament, how I propose to enshrine the welfare state, they can't encapsulate in a soundbite."

On Tuesday, Mr Major complained that his campaign had effectively been hijacked by the issue of Europe – swamping is-

Where is everybody?



How the *Sunday Mirror* featured Mrs Curtiss

such like health and education – in spite of the fact that he had put it at the top of his own agenda in the middle of April.

Yesterday, Mr Major suggested that he was utterly unable to manipulate the news agenda.

"I might make a 40-minute speech this morning on the welfare state," he told the *Election Call* audience.

"I will get one minute of it on the news, if I'm lucky, and that minute, probably, a bit that creates controversy between the parties. It'll be criticised by Tony Blair, who hasn't read it, and by Paddy Ashdown, who hasn't understood it."

"That is a real democratic problem and Margaret Curtiss put her finger on it. I'm not complaining about it. It's a rough life, politics, but that is the reality of how it is these days."

All's fairer for university applicants

Judith Judd
Education Editor

People from working-class backgrounds, ethnic minorities and women all have a better chance of getting to university now than they did before the Conservatives took office, according to a pamphlet published yesterday.

Universities are fairer and more accessible than they were in 1979, Professor David Watson, director of Brighton University, and a member of the Dearing Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, says.

He points out that the proportion of university students in the bottom three social classes has risen from 23 per cent in 1986 to 28 per cent last year.

The participation rate for those in the very bottom social class (E) has doubled since 1991 and that for social class D is up from 12 to 17 per cent.

Women now form just over half of all full-time home (as opposed to overseas) undergraduates compared with 41 per cent in 1979. For ethnic minorities, the participation rate has risen from 10.7 per cent in 1990 to 13 per cent.

The figures are complicated by the fact that the polytechnics, which have traditionally taken more working-class and ethnic minority students than the old universities, were given university status six years ago.

Even if this is taken into account, Professor Watson says, the university system since the expansion triggered by Kenneth Baker, the former secretary of state for education, "is demon-

strably fairer to potential participants than the post-Robins inheritance of 1979".

What is more, he argues, research shows that student achievement has remained as high as it was 18 years ago so the pool of talent is far from exhausted.

But, although the Government willed the end, it failed to will the means, the pamphlet says. "The stark conclusion on the resourcing of this enlarged, more accessible and hence fairer system of higher education is that government has failed to meet its implied commitments through public funding."

This year, the whole university sector is likely to go into financial deficit. Government spending on research and development has fallen sharply during the past decade, and the pay of university teachers is slipping further behind that of people in comparable professions.

Professor Watson said yesterday that the substantial investment needed for higher education would have to come from private as well as public sources.

It was vital, he said, for universities to continue to expand. "If we were to go back to a smaller and more selective system we would lose the social and economic gains we have made through expansion."

He pointed out that retrenchment worked against equal opportunities for all students. The proportion of working-class students went down between 1981 and 1984 when Sir Keith Joseph was squeezing university numbers.

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صكرا من الامم



The voice of Redditch – how three voters came to their decisions



STAYING WITH THE TORIES

Susan Lovett, 38, is a former sales consultant who now stays at home to look after two young children. She has been unhappy with the Conservatives but early in the campaign decided they would still win her vote.

"At the start of the election I was disappointed with Tory arrogance but recognised their record on the management of the country and could not see an alternative. Labour still seemed to be the same party but with a glossy finish – Tony Blair."

"At this general election, probably the most important one for decades, I think it's a great shame that the run-up so far has been dominated by smoke-screen electioneering, sleaze and lies, when the public need to be far better informed, given the importance of the issues, especially Europe."

"Tony Blair has smiled and preened his way into public view but when pressured, wavers and panics, as highlighted by his refusal to appear on a live question-and-answer show on Talk Radio. Are these the actions we want from our leader?"

Indeed, apart from the politicians who have forced their views on us, I feel the most important aspect of the election are the unheard views of the Labour militants who are sitting in the background, waiting. Is Tony Blair strong enough to control them?

"I feel the campaign has turned into a Tony Blair campaign and not a Labour Party one."

"The splits within the Labour Party have been very well hidden. The Tory



campaign has not been so slick and not so well stage-managed. "My view is that John Major can take us carefully into the next century, negotiating strongly on our behalf."



NOT VOTING

Andrew Davies, 19, is a pupil at Arrow Vale High School, a comprehensive in Redditch. He has decided not to vote.

"This will be the first election that I am entitled to vote in; but I am not going to. Not through apathy but through reasoned choice. I feel that I have been made into something of a 'leper' by people who have half-baked notions of what the parties offer and are voting merely because they can, rather than because they have understood what they are voting for. I am familiar with the argument that people have died so that I have the right to vote."

"It would be foolish to claim that I'm not going to vote because politicians don't do enough for 'young people'; rather, I am taking

the idealistic and arrogant position that they don't deserve my vote. Too many ministers are caught out as moralising hypocrites and while I know that no one is perfect it is the smarm and pomposity that seems to surround politicians that annoy me so much."

"I have met all of my local candidates and Tony Blair visited our school. Nothing they said convinced me their party was any different to the others."

"Over the past six weeks we have been almost constantly assailed by one party or another claiming that the election will be decided on policies not personalities, and then within seconds, resort to backbiting and sniping. How is the country to prosper if we entrust it to spoilt children?"

SWITCHING TO NEW LABOUR

Craig Coates, 37, a local government worker, has always voted Conservative before and was a Thatcher supporter, but is switching to Labour.

"I was a Conservative voter because they were the best party for me and my family's personal circumstances. But now I think the country needs a change."

"I think the rot set in when Mrs Thatcher left in 1990, but I voted for John Major in 1992 because there was no way I could have voted for Neil Kinnock."

"Tony Blair is a big improvement on who they've had before."

"As for Paddy Ashdown, he's in the wrong party. If he had the backing of Labour it would be perfect for me."

"Not that I think Labour will necessarily be any better at running the country now – I just hope they will prove me wrong."

"The reason why I'm unhappy is that under the Conservatives the rich seem to be getting richer. They don't seem to care about people in the middle like me."

"Another thing is that I work all the hours and the wife works all the hours, and yet there are people who do no work and are able to sit in the pub all day."

"I think something should be done about it. I think the Conservatives used to do something but there are too many dogooders now."

"Law and order is one of the main issues for me, and I think older people are concerned about job security."

"I'm not sure that Labour will be any bet-



ter, but the point is there is no other choice and I will vote to give them a chance. "I think the election is now a one-horse race. Anything has got to be better than what we have at the moment."

Mondeo Man reporting by Michael Streeter

Forsyth warns Scots of leap into the abyss

Stephen Goodwin

Sounding like a man desperate at the prospect of losing both his Cabinet post and his parliamentary seat, Michael Forsyth yesterday warned Scots that home rule could rob their public services of up to £2.5bn.

Scotland stood on "the edge of a precipice", the Secretary of State for Scotland declared in the most apocalyptic contribution by any party on the final day of campaigning north of the border. A vote for anyone other than the Conservatives would be a "leap into the abyss". Living standards would fall, and health, housing and education services would suffer, he said.

In an apparent breach of convention, Mr Forsyth cited advice from officials within the Scottish Office who, he claimed, had told him the funding formula proposed by Labour and the Liberal Democrats for a devolved administration would cut £1bn to £1.5bn from Scotland's £14bn public expenditure grant. If the Treasury got its way, the cut could be £2.5bn, he claimed.

Normally civil servants are not dragged into the election battle. Mr Forsyth said he had been "reluctant" to reveal their advice, but as the Opposition had had the opportunity of discussions with officials he would be "amazed" if they had not raised the funding issue. "If they have not addressed it, they are not fit to be in government."

Mr Forsyth's deployment of civil servants' advice on the last day of the campaign is a reflection of his own desperate



On the edge: An 0.3% swing would unseat Michael Forsyth

circumstances. Not only does the Tory party in Scotland face a hammering today, but his own seat of Stirling is one of the most vulnerable. Labour needs a swing of just 0.3 per cent to take it.

According to the Constitutional Convention – the blue-

print agreed by Labour and the Lib Dems for home rule – the current formula for calculating Scotland's share of UK spending would continue. However, it also advocates further moves towards equalisation across the UK, with resources distributed "on the basis of relative need".

George Robertson, the shadow Scottish Secretary, dismissed Mr Forsyth's claims as last-gasp scaremongering. "It bears no relation to any advice I have received from the Scottish Office on this point. A Labour chancellor will guarantee Scotland its fair share of Britain's resources side-by-side with home rule."

The Scottish National Party drove home its independence message at a gathering of about 80 supporters beneath the empty parliament building on Calton Hill in Edinburgh.

Alex Salmond, the party leader, predicted the SNP would win "a barrow load of seats" today. In reality, seven or eight, compared to four MPs when the election was called, would be counted a success. Any losses and Mr Salmond's job will be at risk.

The Liberal Democrats, meanwhile, were clinging to the hope that they will become the second party in Scotland. Sir David Steel said a substantial group of Liberal Democrats in the next Parliament could provide a "more radical edge" to a Blair government.

A large number of voters felt the Tories and Labour were offering "something like a choice between Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola", Sir David said.

Negative campaigning works

Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

Despite politicians' pleas for a good, clean fight it seems they may be wasting their time. Scientific studies suggest what the spin doctors say – negative campaigning is remembered better and seen as more informative.

Given equal amounts of positive and negative information about a candidate, the overall impression of voters is skewed towards the negative, says a review of the data available in this month's *Psychiatric Bulletin*.

Dr Nicholas Beecroft, registrar at the Maudsley Hospi-

tal, London, who conducted the review, said that people have a generally positive view of others with the result that negative information is seen as more salient.

"If one expects the average person to be basically decent, honest and polite then if someone is presented as dishonest this would give a more marked impression," he said.

In one study a single negative sentence was enough to sway voters against a candidate, but different shortcomings were given different weight. People were presented with neutral information about two candidates which differed only in

what the candidate was accused of.

"This single sentence was enough to sway the voters against the candidate. Adultery was less negative than corruption. [And] it did not matter whether the accusation came from a partisan or independent source," he added.

Dr Beecroft said that he personally thought the Tories' "demon eyes" campaign had been the most effective image in the run-up to this election. "It was very clever. It reminded people of last time when it looked like Labour were going to win and then at the last minute long standing fears made people

change. Excessive fear is counterproductive."

"Although most people see negative campaigning for what it is and find it unethical, they still find it more informative."

But he warned that no politician could hope to win an election just by smearing their opponents. Emotions alone played a larger part in how people voted than their beliefs about them. "If you look at past elections – Thatcher, Reagan – there are great emotional factors involved, the fact that someone was a great leader or they had a great story to tell. It is a phenomenon that is very difficult to pin down."

HOW I WILL VOTE: TOM CONTI

I'd rather have independents but it's not going to happen this time

How will you vote
Liberal Democrat

Have you always supported them?

I have for a while. There was a time when I didn't vote at all, as a kind of stupid protest. I'm sure the parties were all terribly upset. But I do still find the two-party system ludicrous. I find party politics ludicrous, really. I'd rather have independents, but that's clearly not going to happen this time.

The most impressive thing about the Liberal Democrats is their education policy: classes of 30 up to the age of 11, for example. It really should be classes of 10 up to the age of 12, if you're going to bite into the downward spiral, but I think the Liberal Democrat policies are the best.

Is education the most important issue in this election? Yes. Absolutely. The most. If you don't have an educated popu-



The actor Tom Conti

children as adults, and their children in turn. Education is not just about reading and writing, it's about how to get on together, and having respect for one another, which seems to have gone completely now.

Also the Liberal Democrat health policy is good; they have a recruitment plan for doctors and nurses, which I think is so vital.

You were born a Scot; do you have any feelings for the SNP?

No. But then, I don't live in Scotland and I haven't lived in Scotland for a quarter of a century, so I'm not going to make pronouncements for what I think they should do.

Have there been any particularly important influences on your political views? Well, I've been through the whole thing. I was severely left in my twenties, but I started being brought up as a Tory, a

middle-class Scot. Then after my twenties, disinterest, really. Which is still quite large... but you can't just stand by and wait, really. You have to vote.

Are you looking forward to 2 May?

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Hong Kong

handover

Tung vows to permit protests

Pro-democracy groups welcome chief executive's nod towards tolerance, but remain sceptical

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

Tung Chee-hwa, the Chief Executive designate of the incoming Hong Kong government, has vowed that a Tiananmen Square-type massacre will not happen in the territory because "I will not allow it to happen."

He said that in Hong Kong "we permit, sometimes we even encourage, demonstrations" and added that "demonstrations are part of our culture."

Mr Tung was speaking in an interview with America's ABC television station. His remarks were immediately welcomed in Hong Kong by leaders of the colony's pro-democracy parties and organisations yesterday but they questioned why he was telling an American audience that the right to demonstrate was guaranteed while at the same time preparing legislation which will curtail the rights of assembly, especially at short notice.

Cheung Man-kwong, a legislator and leader of the alliance supporting China's democracy movement, said he would feel more convinced by Mr Tung's remarks if he was not preparing laws which outlawed



Cold comfort: Illegal immigrants, carrying their children, demand the right to remain in Hong Kong yesterday

Photograph: Reuters

demonstrations violating "national security". Mr Cheung's organisation has been branded as "subversive" by China and would therefore be unable to function if Chinese criteria

were applied in Hong Kong.

However Mr Tung insisted that "Hong Kong was living in a different world" where Chinese laws would not apply. Nevertheless it was revealed yes-

terday that the first legislative act of the China-appointed Provisional Legislature for Hong Kong would be to pass a law curtailing the right to demonstrate and roll back other civil

rights which have come into law in recent years.

In a characteristically oblique criticism of Mr Tung, Governor Chris Patten said yesterday that while he had no reason to doubt his successor was sincere, he failed to understand how guarantees of the right to demonstrate given by an individual could overrule new legislation aimed at curtailing the right to demonstrate.

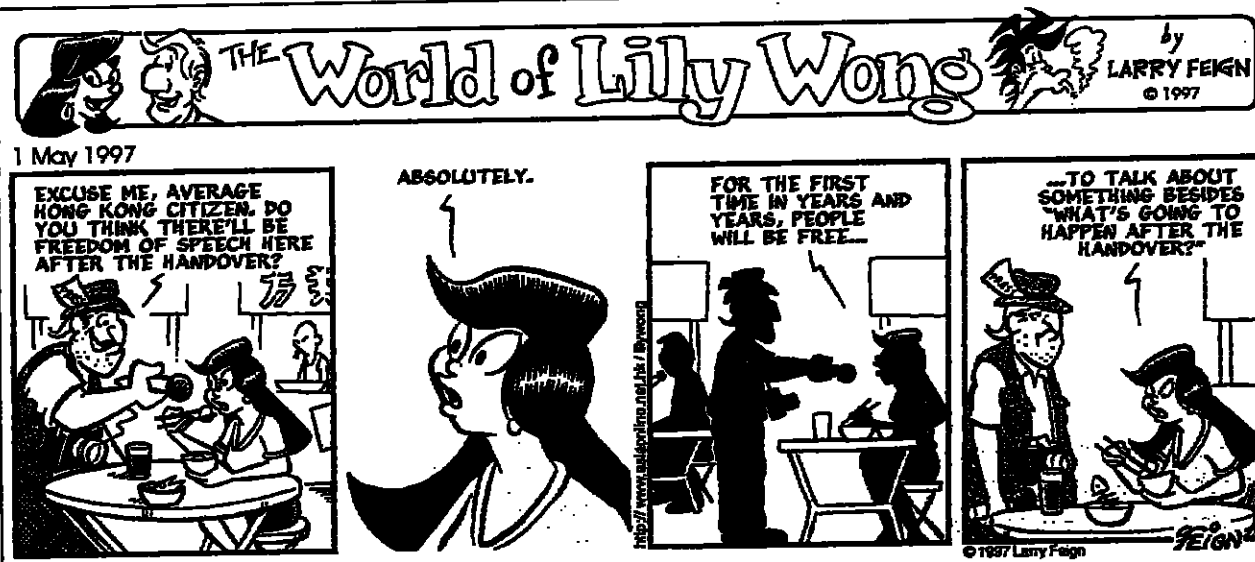
Martin Lee, the leader of the Democratic Party, also questioned whether Mr Tung had the power to prevent a Tiananmen Square-type massacre in Hong Kong. He said that "if the troops are ordered by their officers to shoot", they would do so and the Chief Executive would be powerless to stop them.

Invited to express criticism of the Tiananmen Square massacre, Mr Tung declined to give a direct response. He described it as "an event nobody wanted to see happen". Adding, "I think history should be the

judge of this particular event. But one thing, in looking back, you can say is this: that in the eight years since, China's progress in the economic front has been enormous and that was possible because of the stability, the social stability that now prevails all across the nation."

Mr Tung is said to be increasingly dismayed about the negative image of his incoming administration in the United States. However he appears, yet again, to have reinforced the view that all his public utterances mirror remarks by Chinese officials.

Mr Tung is now using the exact terminology employed by Chinese officials - in both Chinese and English - even including the remark that Mr Lee and his associates will be disappointed if they want to become martyrs. This remark was made on a number of occasions by Lu Ping, the most senior Chinese official in charge of Chinese affairs, during a recent visit to Canada.



Rank and file: A Chinese guard of honour destined for Hong Kong shows off the new uniforms Photograph: Reuters

Chinese military march with style

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

Gone are the plain egalitarian olive-green suits of the Maoist era, with four pockets for officers and two for other ranks. Gone, too, is the 1988 redesign, which introduced rank insignia.

As seen in these photographs, the Chinese Armed Forces have been showing off new uniforms designed to present a friendlier image in the run-up to the handover of Hong Kong next month. The photographs were taken in Peking. But, for the moment, the new uniforms are likely to be restricted to those in high-profile jobs in Hong Kong or abroad.

"If we are going to change all the uniforms it's going to be a very big job for us", a Chinese military spokesman said. At the last count, there were more than 2 million in the Chinese forces. The new outfits, with Russian-style shoulder boards indicating rank, are designed to make Chinese soldiers, sailors and airmen and women easier

to equate with those of other countries.

The army has chosen a shade closer to the British khaki than the olive-green of the past; the air force, blue; and the navy is wearing white, in common with the summer uniforms of other navies around the world. The officers leading the parade in the photograph are *zhongwei* - lieutenants - one vertical stripe and two stars. The commander of the Chinese People's Liberation Army contingent which arrived in Hong Kong last week, Major-General Zhou Borong, wears all-gold shoulder straps with a single star.

The uniforms owe a lot to the influence of Russia and the Soviet Union. The idea of silver or gold braid on the shoulders started in the Crimean war, when Russian officers removed it from their cuffs because it was too conspicuous to Turkish, French and British snipers.

So that officers could still be distinguished by their own men, they sewed the braid on to their shoulder straps instead.

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Italy's men of violence throw off the state's chains

Andrew Gumbel
Palermo

It was the defining moment of the Cold War in Italy, the moment when the Christian Democrat establishment made its unholy alliance with the world of organised crime and sealed it with blood. Fifty years ago today, a crowd of peasants celebrating May Day in the rugged hills of the Palermo hinterland were mown down by machine-guns determined to deter them once and for all from voting for the Communists.

The massacre at Portella della Ginestra, coming just a few days after an unexpected victory for the left in Sicily's first ever regional elections, claimed 11 dead and 55 wounded. It was a remarkably low casualty toll given the narrowness of the pass where they were gathered and the appalling wounds inflicted by bullets ricocheting off the rocks.

The new MAFIA

As intended, though, it shocked the Sicilian peasantry back into the arms of the establishment, an establishment in which the interests of the big landowners, the Christian Democrats, the Church and the Mafia all converged with the full approval and even encouragement of the US government.

The exact chain of responsibility for the massacre has never been established, although it almost certainly won the tacit approval of all the big power-brokers and attracted no more than a murmur of disquiet from the Christian Democrats' notoriously repressive Interior Minister Mario Scelba. The



Family ties: Unconcerned Mafia suspects are led to the courtroom following the Portella della Ginestra machinegun massacre of 1947

Photograph: AP

man who organised the attack, the charismatic bandit Salvatore Giuliano, was no more than a tool of the larger forces but he nevertheless enjoyed their protection for a long time afterwards.

While ceaseless attempts were theoretically being made to capture Giuliano, he was in fact holding court to a never-ending stream of journalists and admirers at his home town of Montelepre just over the hills

from Portella della Ginestra. "The only people unable to find Giuliano were the police," a court sentence concluded years later, by which time Giuliano had been betrayed and killed, and the *pax mafiosa* in Sicily had

become so normal it had lost much of its power to shock public opinion.

The Mafia thus re-established itself as a bulwark against Communism. It remained on intimate, if occasionally ambivalent, terms with the Christian Democrats throughout the Cold War as Italy's political system became increasingly bogged down and Cosa Nostra built up a vast international empire in drugs smuggling and other rackets.

Some of the lessons of Portella della Ginestra are still valid today, notably that the fortunes of any mafia crime organisation - whether in Sicily, Calabria, Naples, northern Italy or elsewhere - depend largely on the complicity, or at least the weakness, of the state structure with which it must compete for control of territory.

Of course, the big change has been the end of the Cold War. In Italy's case it occurred not so much in 1989 as in 1992, when the Christian Democrat-led order collapsed under an intolerable burden of corruption scandals and the Mafia, taking advantage of the political chaos, launched a full-scale war on the establishment. It was in 1992 that Giovanni Falcone, the magistrate who did more than anyone before or since to penetrate the secrets of Cosa Nostra and dismantle its leadership, was blown up along with his wife and police escort on the way into Palermo from the airport. Within two months, Falcone's closest colleague Paolo Borsellino was also eliminated in a massive car bomb that exploded outside his house.

The result of these murders, the most shocking of a long string of so-called *cadaveri eccellenti* or "illustrious corpses", was to galvanise popular opinion, the politicians, the police, the magistrature and horrified members of Cosa Nostra itself into an unprecedented counter-attack on the Mafia. Over the next three years, with the help of new legislation and a witness protection programme, hundreds of new informers came forward and one high-profile arrest after another was made, particularly in the upper echelons of the Corleonesi, the clan that ran Cosa Nostra in the 1980s and early 90s and was responsible for its strategy of terror against the state.

Trials for the murders of Falcone and Borsellino were put together in record time, based on the kind of detailed evidence of which most prosecutors can usually only dream.

Meanwhile, all sorts of dirty linen started coming out. It led, most spectacularly, to the arrest and trial of Giulio Andreotti, the grand old man of the Christian Democrat party, on charges of mafia collusion and murder. But there were also precious new insights into such mysteries as the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro, the Christian Democrat leader, in 1978 and the death of Roberto Calvi, the banker with connections in both the Mafia and the Vatican, in London in 1982.

Then something happened. Part of it was no doubt a loss of momentum - these things have always gone in waves - but mostly it was due to an attempted political counter-revolution bent on rolling back the extraordinary achievements of the judges. When Silvio Berlusconi, a man himself under investigation for gross malpractice in his media empire, became prime minister in 1994, he all but stopped the magistrates dead in their tracks and the work of the parliamentary anti-Mafia commission ground to a near standstill.

Murder of a magistrate



End of a gangbuster: The wreck of Falcone's car after a bomb killed him, his wife and three bodyguards in 1992

Falcone's brief promise of hope

Giovanni Falcone was not only the most effective magistrate ever to take on the Mafia, he virtually invented the techniques necessary to burrow into the organisation's secret world.

It was Falcone who first induced a senior mafioso, Tommaso Buscetta, to break the organisation's tabloid code of silence. It was Falcone who masterminded the huge trials of the mid-1980s, in which hundreds of mafiosi stared out of cages at the back of the specially-built courtroom in Palermo as life sentences after life sentences were passed upon them.

And it was Falcone, along with his distinguished colleague Paolo Borsellino, who came to understand the mentality of the mafioso and laid bare the structure of the

organisation - its strange codes and initiation rites, its values and its strategies.

In a place like Sicily, where the boundaries of state authority and mafia infiltration are never clear, the work of a magistrate is about far more than a simple upholding of the law. After his initial successes, Falcone had to spend much of his time protecting himself from poison within the system - including the Palermo prosecutors' office itself.

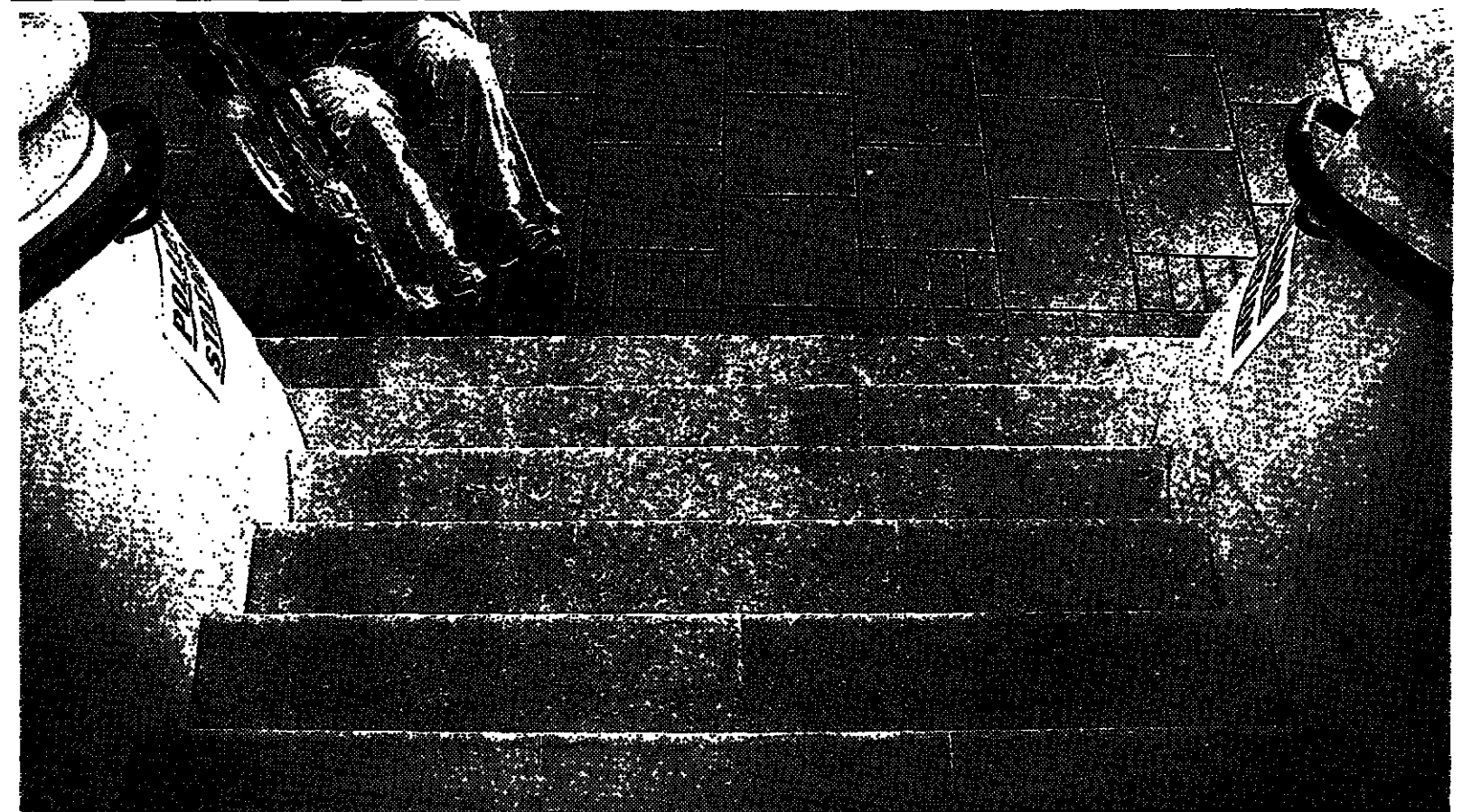
By 1992, he had been forced to leave Palermo and took up the job of nationwide "super-prosecutor". On 23 May that year, he was on his way from Palermo airport into the city when an enormous explosion tore open the road surface, claiming not only his life but that of his wife and three bodyguards. He was 53.

Falcone's achievement remains unique. Nothing like the same body of knowledge has ever emanated from other Mafia regions such as Calabria or Naples. There are now more than 1,000 informers spilling out details of Cosa Nostra's activities and murky links with the establishment. It remains to be seen how much longer without Falcone they will keep talking.



Falcone: Broke the Mafia's code of silence

Andrew Gumbel



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Man of substance sizes up Brunei trade prospects



Chancellor Kohl with Brunei's Foreign Minister, Mohamed Bolkiah, on arrival in the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, to promote trade Photograph: AP

Warships and planes hunt Antarctic fish raiders

Ray Lilley
Associated Press

Wellington – France and Britain have sent warships to the Antarctic, and New Zealand is sending surveillance planes aloft to stop an international fleet of ships poaching the prized toothfish.

Strict controls were imposed on Antarctic fish resources last year under a 23-nation Antarctic fisheries control agreement, known as the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

But "reflagged" fishing vessels from Spain, Norway and even the United States – all co-signers to the agreement – are among those plundering toothfish, according to New Zealand

government officials. More than 40 vessels have taken over 30,000 tonnes of toothfish in South Africa's sub-Antarctic waters, Simon Upton, New Zealand's associate Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister, said yesterday.

"Toothfish has a very high value in Southeast Asia. In Japan, it is almost worth bars of gold," said Commandant Bernard O'Mahony, spokesman for France's Marine Nationale. O'Mahony confirmed French forces had intercepted two fishing vessels in the protected zone around its sub-Antarctic Crozet Island.

On 31 March, the Singaporean ship *Belgie III* was apprehended carrying toothfish. On April 19, the Portuguese

ship *Mar L'argo* was caught. "Since mid-March, the French government insisted on reinforcing the presence of the Marine Nationale in this area in order to protect it," he said.

Jean-Claude Nola, a spokesman for the French Foreign Ministry, said a frigate and two towboats had been sent to the area. South Africa is reported ready to send warships and maritime surveillance airplanes to try to halt the illegal fishing.

Poachers are raiding toothfish areas around France and Australia's sub-Antarctic Heard and McDonald Islands.

Britain has already used gunboats to chase out Spanish and Norwegian fishing boats around its South Georgia islands in the

Falklands. Those ships reportedly fly Chilean and Argentine "flags of convenience."

Not much is known of the fish, first named five years ago the "Patagonian toothfish." It is a long fish with a large mouth and is believed to be bottom-dwelling, living off cod. It lives for up to 25 years.

Spanish and Norwegian boats are also deliberately breaching the agreements made by their governments, using Panamanian and Vanuatuan flags to disguise themselves, New Zealand officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity. US and Japanese vessels were also reported to be involved, they said.

New Zealand's sub-Antarctic island waters and Ross Sea De-

pendency are seen as a new area for potential plunder. Upton said a New Zealand Air Force surveillance plane had already made one trip to the Antarctic and it would be returning regularly. He said the illegal fishing threatened the fragile Antarctic ecosystem.

"It may pose a threat to the waters south of New Zealand, if reports that this fishing is continuing to spread westwards into French and Australian Antarctic waters, are borne out," he said.

Any military protection of the region is handicapped by the vast distances involved and influenced by the role of the gateway countries, New Zealand, Australia, Chile, Argentina and South Africa.

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angel helps
Dakota
rise above
the floodsDavid Osborne
New York

There is nothing like a flood to bring out the American community spirit. We saw it in 1993 when the Mississippi drowned swathes of the Midwest and we witnessed it again this month as the Red River ran riot in North Dakota – legions of citizens pitching in to save homes and neighbourhoods.

The generosity of one woman will surely be hard to beat, however. Without revealing her identity, she has pledged \$2,000 (£1,250) of her own money to every household hit by flooding this month in Grand Forks, North Dakota, and neighbouring East Grand Forks in Minnesota.

Officials said that a sum of \$2m had been transferred into a city account by Tuesday and distribution to the worst-hit households had already begun. With at least 5,000 homes likely to qualify, the total cost to the mystery angel could be between \$10m and \$15m.

"God has answered our prayers," Grand Forks Mayor Pat Owens said of the gift. "He has sent a person as an anonymous donor who cares about each and every one of us in this region and wants to help you without any repayment. It is a ray of hope so we can build our future."

The benefactor, who is said to have no personal links to North Dakota, was presumably moved by the images beamed from Grand Forks 10 days ago when the cresting waters forced the evacuation of its entire population and part of its centre was gutted by a fire no one could put out.

While the worst is over, 50,000 people in the city remained homeless yesterday.

In the meantime, the crest of the flooding Red River has travelled north into Manitoba, Canada, causing the evacuation of 8,000 people from their homes in Winnipeg on Tuesday. Manitoba is braced for its worst floods since 1852.

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obituaries / gazette

Peng Zhen

In February 1979, Chinese dissidents circulated an unofficial journal including an article calling for the newly rehabilitated ex-mayor of Peking, Peng Zhen, to be given work in the legal field. The article called him upright and outspoken, a dauntless man who would do nothing against his conscience.

At the time of his death, however, he was remembered more by Peking liberals as a die-hard conservative who helped China rebuild its legal system after the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, but who saw the law as a tool of dictatorship rather than of democracy.

Peng was once one of the most powerful men in China, tipped by some observers as a potential successor to Chairman Mao. Yet, although he remained an influential figure long after his retirement in the late 1980s, his death will probably have little impact on the balance of power. Its main significance is that China is now even closer to the day when its leaders will no longer feel obliged to heed the wishes of veterans like Peng who were key figures back in the Communist Party's infancy.

Peng was born in a rural area of northern Shanxi Province in 1902, nine years before the collapse of China's last imperial dynasty. He joined the Communist Party at the age of 21, two years after its founding. China was then in ferment. Young people like Peng were growing disillusioned with the weakness and corruption of the new government. Despite his peasant origins, Peng's early career in the party was de-

voted to urban areas. He led anti-government protests among workers and students in several cities of northern China until his arrest in 1929.

During his six years in jail, Peng – according to official accounts – remained devoted to the party cause. He organised several hunger strikes and even set up a party branch while behind bars. Such experiences, however, appeared not to inspire any sympathy in his later life for student and worker activists imprisoned for their involvement in anti-government unrest in the 1970s and 1980s.

After his release, Peng secured high positions in the underground party. When the Japanese invaded China in 1937, Peng took a leading role in planning guerrilla resistance in the north. Four years later, he joined Mao Tse-tung and the party's other top leaders at their hideout in the caves of Yan'an. One of his main jobs was to supervise the indoctrination of aspiring party cadres in "Mao Tse-tung Thought". Shortly before the Japanese surrender in 1945, Peng was promoted to the Politburo.

Peng's importance in the party leadership was evident in his appointment as Peking's first Communist Party chief after the city's "liberation" from nationalist forces in 1949. Two years later, he was given the mayorship as well.

The reason why dissidents in the late 1970s saw Peng as the potential saviour of the country's shattered legal system was because of his extensive work in that area in the early years of Communist rule, including the drafting of the country's first criminal code, which was eventually adopted in 1979. Ironically, however, Peng showed little inclination to tolerate outspoken criticism of the party. He is believed to have been sceptical about Mao's brief tolerance of open debate in 1957, and played an important role in the purge of intellectuals that followed.

Peng's relationship with Mao must have soured after the disastrous Great Leap Forward, which led to the death by starvation of millions of people in the early 1960s. Peng sided

with Deng Xiaoping in blaming Mao for the famine, a move that almost certainly led to Mao's decision to purge him at the outset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. Peng Zhen was the first top-ranking victim of the upheaval. Deng and other critics of Mao's policies followed.

Peng spent the Cultural Revolution in the countryside, living among peasants, chopping his own firewood and drawing his own water. As with other victims of Mao's excesses, his misfortunes boosted his popular standing enormously. Hundreds of friends and admirers turned out to greet him at Peking airport in 1978, two years after Mao's death, when he was allowed to return from his exile.

The wishes of the dissident author that Peng return to legal work were quickly realised. From 1979, he played a major role in establishing a legal system and promulgating a new Constitution that reflected the more reform-oriented policies of China's new strongman, Deng Xiaoping. In 1983, he was made head of the country's rubber stamp parliament, the National People's Congress. He retired in 1988.

In 1989, Peng displayed his true instincts by firmly supporting the decision to unleash the Chinese army on unarmed demonstrators in Peking. He expressed fears that, if the unrest was allowed to continue, China would be plunged into a new Cultural Revolution-style upheaval. He said that promoting "bourgeois liberalisation" – as the party describes Western political views – was unconstitutional.

Despite his advanced years and lack of any formal title, Peng remained a significant force in politics at least until the early 1990s. He remained worried about the impact of "bourgeois liberal" thinking in China, but according to his official biography "highly appraised" Deng's decision to speed up the pace of economic reform in early 1992.

James Miles

Peng Zhen, politician: born Quwo County, Shanxi Province, China 12 October 1902; married (four sons, one daughter); died Peking 26 April 1997.



Peng: dauntless die-hard.

William Righter

When the English Department at Warwick University opened for business in 1965, there were five founder members: George Hunter and C.J. Rawson (who both moved to Yale) and three who stayed the course till they retired in the 1990s: Bill Whitehead, Bill Righter and myself.

Those were pioneering days. We all had to teach things we hadn't expected or weren't prepared to teach. Righter's interests, in some ways so wide, were in others highly selective – not for him the broad-brush epic and medieval foundation courses – and he contrived, with his disarming and civilised charm, to carve for himself early on a highly successful career in those areas where literature and philosophy meet, and in which he was to become an acknowledged authority.

He had, indeed, published his first and influential book, *Logic and Criticism* (1963), before joining the staff. As the link-man between the two departments of English and philosophy he taught courses involving both disciplines to carefully selected and highly responsive students, many of whom became stars.

In other ways, too, Righter stood out among the five of us: not because he was an American (so was Bill Whitehead) but because he had Europeanised himself in the most delightful way. He chose to live in London, commuting weekly to Warwick.

Consequently he was not always to be found at some of our more tedious meetings. He was conspicuously his own man, and was virtually able to create his own programmes in areas where he was specially qualified. He was an expert in French literature, and throughout his years at Warwick he regularly taught courses in French and English comparative literature, setting side by side, for critical analysis, pairs of poems chosen from the two languages, a technique virtually invented at Warwick. It was in small groups, rather than in the larger lecture, that his talents best shone.

William Righter was born in Kansas City in 1927. He was educated at Harvard and at Oxford University. He then returned to the United States where he taught for some years at Cornell University. In 1960 he began to



Righter: cosmopolitan

lecture at King's College, Cambridge, where he remained until his appointment to Warwick.

His second book was *The Rhetorical Hero* (1964), a study of André Malraux which brought together his understanding of French literature and of Malraux's work in philosophy and art criticism. Righter himself was something of a connoisseur of the museums and art galleries of Europe. His other books were *Myth and Literature* (1975), which enjoyed something of a vogue and became highly influential, and *The Myth of Theory* (1994), in which he scrutinised with learning and scepticism some of the current fashions in literary theory.

Righter retired from the university in 1993. His retirement party was an agreeable occasion: I recall a characteristically throwaway speech, in which he looked back with fond nostalgia on those early days when some of our new, younger colleagues had not yet been born. He continued to keep in touch with the university and to contribute to conferences and seminars up till last summer. He leaves a widow, Rosemary, who is chief leader writer on the Times.

K. W. Gransden

William Harvey Righter, English scholar: born Kansas City 31 August 1927; Reader in English and Comparative Literature, Warwick University 1965-93; married three times; died London 14 April 1997.



Principal boy: Manners as Prince Valiant in *Red Riding Hood* at the Alhambra, Bradford, 1948

Margery Manners

If Sophie Tucker was dubbed "The Last of the Red Hot Mammies", then surely Margery Manners should have been called "The Last of the Cool Curvaceous Chorusers". She strode the stages of the last British variety theatres belting out the song hits of yesteryear as if she still lived in the days when it was a long way to Tipperary. Never top of the bill even in her heyday, she was nevertheless much loved by those who belong to such groups as the British Music Hall Society, for whom she sang until quite recently, and by the comedian Roy Hudd, a variety aficionado, who booked her for many of his nostalgic recreations.

Manners was born in Coventry in 1926, and, like many of the music-hall stars she came to emulate, began appearing in public as a child, aged eight, singing popular songs of the day in the working men's clubs of Birmingham. Four years later the 12-year-old turned professional and joined that popular show band of the Thirties, Billy Merrin and his Commanders, for their seaside summer season at Ramsgate. Returning home she became a solo artist for the first time, singing in cine-variety on a tour of the Paramount cinemas, beginning in Birmingham.

She had yet to find her forte as a chorus singer in the traditional style, something which would come with the Second World War. Meanwhile, at the age of 14, she turned cowgirl crooner and joined the famous radio series then touring the halls, Big Bill Campbell and his Rocky Mountain Rhythm.

As the war deepened, the silver-haired ranch boss from Canada and his hill-billy band enlisted in Ensa. His large show was divided into two units, and

toured service stations everywhere from Orkney to Iceland. Manners sang aboard every kind of naval vessel, from the decks of battleships to aircraft carriers, before illness through overwork caused her to return to civilian life after serving 15 months hard singing. She was thrilled to receive a letter of commendation for services rendered, signed by the twin heads of Ensa, the producer Basil Dean and the actor Sir Seymour Hicks.

Manners turned to radio broadcasting and, with her experience of getting sailors to sing along with her choruses, became a great hit with the factory audiences of the lunchtime BBC series *Workers' Playtime*. More and more she incorporated yesterday's favourites into her act, and soon rivalled that other queen of the chorus songs, Bertha Wilmot. But there was plenty of room for both in those bombed and blacked-out days when a singsong in the shelter was just the thing to drown the sound of the blitz.

Her links with the music hall grew even stronger when she became almost a fixture on the BBC's old-time music-hall series, *Palace of Varieties*. What listeners did not suspect, however, was revealed when they saw Manners on stage: she played both the guitar and the accordion.

Christmas pantomimes could hardly pass such a singer by, and from the age of 16 she became a regular principal boy, starting with a splendidly thigh-slapping Prince Charming in the production of *Cinderella* that toured the Stoll and Moss circuit. From 1946 she joined the annual pantomime productions presented by Francis Laidler. In the Fifties the link between

Manners and music hall was finally forged to perfection: she played none other than the mistress of chorus singing herself, Florrie Forde, in a television production called *The Passing Show*. Later she appeared frequently on *The Old Days*, televised from the City Varieties Theatre in Leeds.

Despite never attaining true top-of-the-bill status, Margery Manners was always popular with audiences both at home and abroad, and from the Sixties to the Seventies she starred in the theatres of South Africa with great success. In 1968 she appeared in her only film, *Mrs Brown You've Got a Lovely Daughter*. While Herman's Hermits sang the latest hits of the day, Manners sang "My Old Man's a Dustman".

From 1969 she toured the last remaining variety theatres in a nostalgic bill called *The Golden Years of Music Hall*. She sang her chorus songs between such veterans as Bob and Alf Pearson ("My Brother and I"), Nat ("Rubberneck"), Jackley and Sandy ("Can You Hear Me Mother") Powell. In 1975 Roy Hudd brought her out of retirement to star in a special Sunday-night show at the London Palladium, and 14 years later she sang once more for Hudd in the special video show *On Stage Please*, recorded at the Hackney Empire, in east London. For the last time she strode the stage as Florrie Forde – singing her famous "Flanagan, Take Me to the Isle of Man Again" – and they all joined in the chorus.

Denis Gifford

Margery Manners, singer and dancer: born Coventry 18 March 1926; married; died London 27 April 1997.

Gabriel Figueroa

When the Mexican film *La Perla* ("The Pearl") opened in New York in 1948, the critic of *Cine* magazine was moved to describe the film as "so beautiful in its imagery, so enthralling in the poetry and rhythm of its marvellously composed scenes, that it sets a new high standard for all motion picture photography". The photographer in question, described by the critic as "one of the world's great photographers", was Gabriel Figueroa, a brilliant craftsman who, with *The Pearl's* director, Emilio Fernandez, is generally considered responsible for establishing Mexican films as a leading force in world cinema.

The winner of many international awards (including two consecutive awards for Best Photography at the Cannes Festival), Figueroa was a master of eloquent shadows, dazzling cloud photography and stark contrast between shade and light, and he made dramatic use of Mexico's vivid scenery and tropical radiance. Luis Buñuel, John Ford and John Huston were other notable directors with whom he collaborated.

Born in Mexico City in 1907, Figueroa was orphaned when young and had to seek work, but managed to pursue his interest in painting and photography, studying with Eduardo Guerrero. In 1932 he became a stills photographer, and then a camera assistant to Alex Phillips, a Canadian cinematographer who had become an important part of the Mexican film industry. In 1935 Figueroa went to the United States to study as an assistant to Gregg Toland, one of Hollywood's most creative cinematographers and a master of deep focus. Returning to Mexico the following year, Figueroa made his debut as director of photography on *Alla en el Rancho Grande* (1936).

His association with Emilio Fernandez started in 1943 with *Flor Silvestre* and their second film together, *Maria Candelaria* (1943), won the Grand Prize at Cannes in 1946 and for Figueroa an award for photographic excellence. He won the same award the following year for Fernandez' *Enamorada* (1946), which was followed by *La Perla* (1946), based on John Steinbeck's story of a poor Mexican diver who finds an enormous pearl that brings tragedy instead of wealth and happiness.

The diver was played by Pedro Armendariz, who played the lead in many of the team's films. Though the film won the Grand Prize at San Sebastian, the script and direction were



Figueroa: eloquent shadows

generally considered inferior to the majestic photography, which was compared to early Flaherty.

Fernandez acted as associate producer on John Ford's *The Fugitive* (1947), filmed in Mexico and based on a Graham Greene story about a priest on the run in a police state. Though unpopular with both critics and public at the time, it remained a favourite of the director. "To me it was perfect," he told Peter Bogdanovich. "It had a lot of damn good photography, with those black and white shadows. We had a good cameraman, Gabriel Figueroa, and we'd wait for the light – instead of the way it is nowadays where, regardless of the light, you shoot."

Figueroa was hired in an advisory capacity on *Tarzan and the Mermaids* (1948), but he declined offers to work in the US permanently. Both he and Hernandez (who had fought in the Mexican revolution) were fiercely patriotic and proud of the acclaim they had brought to Mexican cinema. Most of the films they made reflected the social and economic conditions in which they had grown up.

The dapper and genial Figueroa's personality was in stark contrast to that of the tempestuous Fernandez (who once shot a film critic during an argument). A rare English-language film, *The Torch* (1950), directed by Fernandez and starring Paulette Goddard and Armand Armand, was unsuccessful, praised only for its photography, but the same year Figueroa worked for the first time with Luis Buñuel, on *Los Olvidados*, a harshly realistic study of children in the slums made in only 21 days.

Buñuel, who was to become noted for his "invisible mise-en-scène", had strict views on the way he wanted his films photographed and Figueroa was able to realise his aims, whether in the narrative passages replete with symbolism or the surreal dream sequences. *Los Olvidados* won the photographer another prize at Cannes. Further Buñuel movies included *Nazarin* (1959), *La Joven* (1961), *El Ángel Exterminador* (1962) and *Simón del Desierto* (1965).

When John Huston filmed Tennessee Williams's torrid tale of a defrocked priest working as a tour-guide in Mexico, *The Night of the Iguana* (1964), it was Figueroa who helped him capture the requisite atmosphere of scorched earth and exotic flora in which Richard Burton, Deborah Kerr and Ava Gardner emoted. In 1970 two Clint Eastwood action movies made in Europe had photography by Figueroa, *Two Mules for Sister Sara* and *Kelly's Heroes*. He worked with Huston again on what was to be Figueroa's last film, *Under the Volcano* (1984), imparting a richly atmospheric aura to the tale of an alcoholic diplomat (Albert Finney) in 1930s Mexico.

Tom Vailance

Gabriel Figueroa, cinematographer: born Mexico City 24 April 1907; married (one son, one daughter); died Mexico City 27 April 1997.

Denis Compton

Scyld Berry states in his obituary of Denis Compton [24 April] that the great contemporaries Hutton and Compton shared only one century stand in Test matches. Although fewer perhaps than might have been expected, there were five, writes J. K. Dishman. Against the West Indies at Lords (1939); Australia at Nottingham (1948); New Zealand at Leeds (1949); Australia at Lords (1953); and the West Indies at Georgetown (1953-54).

Berry also suggests that rough matches against the Aus-

tralians were too much for Compton. In 1938, aged 19, he became the youngest player to score a century in his first Test against county while in the next match he stayed in for four hours, saving the side from defeat. In the first two Ashes series after the war he scored over a thousand runs in 10 matches at an average of 57. After that his effectiveness was sadly reduced by damage to his knee.

Finally, it was Compton's second wife who came from South Africa, not his first.

Reason for delay may be abuse of process of the court

LAW REPORT

1 May 1997

Grove v. Donohoe, House of Lords (Lord Goff of Chieveley, Lord Woolf, Lord Nicholls of Birkenhead, Lord Slynn and Lord Clyde) 24 April 1997

The court was entitled to dismiss an action where it concluded that the reason for delay on the part of the plaintiff involved abusing the process of the court by continuing proceedings with no intention of bringing them to trial.

The House of Lords dismissed the plaintiff's appeal against the Court of Appeal's dismissal of his appeal against an order that the writ and statement of claim in the proceedings should be struck out and the action dismissed for want of prosecution.

The plaintiff's claim was for damages for libel. Proceedings were commenced in August 1989. The action was dismissed for want of prosecution in October 1992.

Isaac Jacob and Martin Young (Plaintiffs) for the appellants; the respondents were not represented.

The requirement in *Birkett v James* that delay had to cause "serious prejudice" to the defendants had been the subject of criticism. Those criticisms had been considered by Lord Griffiths in *Department of Transport v Chris Smaller Transport Ltd* [1989] AC 1197.

The period which had elapsed since Lord Griffiths' speech had not seen any improvement in the problems caused by delay in the conduct of civil proceedings. The introduction of the automatic strike-out in the county court had proved to be a crude remedy which had funded an industry of satellite litigation. Furthermore, there was now on the horizon the introduction of the sort of reform to the rules of procedure which Lord Griffiths thought was required.

In that situation it was at least open to question whether it was not preferable to wait the outcome of the implementation of the new rules before making a substantial inroad into the principles in *Birkett v James*.

In the meantime both the court and defendants had the means to achieve greater control over delay. Defendants did not need to wait until there had been inordinate delay before applying for peremptory orders, and the courts should more readily make "unless orders", i.e. orders that an action should be struck out unless certain steps were taken at certain times.

In the present case the judge had come to the conclusion that there had been inordinate and inexcusable delay. He had found that there was "an element of prejudice" but had attached more importance to his finding that the plaintiff had no interest in actively pursuing the litigation.

His Lordship was satisfied that both the deputy judge and the Court of Appeal were entitled to reach the conclusion they had as to the reason for the appellant's inactivity in the libel action for over two years. The courts existed to enable parties to have their disputes resolved. To commence and continue litigation with no intention of bringing it to conclusion could amount to abuse of process. If there was an abuse of process it was not strictly necessary to establish want of prosecution under either of the limbs in *Birkett v James*.

In the present case, once the conclusion was reached that the reason for the delay was one which involved abusing the process of the court in maintaining proceedings when there was no intention of carrying the case to trial, the court was entitled to dismiss the proceedings.

Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

CASEMENT: On 28 April 1997, at St. Mary's Hospital, to Tina (née Butler) and Jonathan, a son, George William.

EXADACTYLOS: On 28 April, at the Portland Hospital, to Diana and Philippos, a son, Alexandros Dimitrios.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS may be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned on 0171-293 2012 or faxed to 0171-293 2018, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Duke of York attends the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association - Forces Help Fund Luncheon at the Savoy Hotel, London WC2. Princess Margaret launches a programme of social improvement in the state of Tennessee in Kentucky Gardens, London W2, and attends the Royal Canadian Ball at the Grosvenor House Hotel, London W1.

Changing of the Guard: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment presents the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. No. 7 Company Colours are presented to the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.05am. Band provided by the Scots Guards.

Birthdays

Mr Naim Attallah, publisher, 66; Mr John Belcher, Chief Executive, Anchor Trust, 50; Mr Gary Berrill, conductor, 70; Sir Richard Brooke, chartered accountant, 82; Mr Steve Caubien, jockey, 37; Mr Ian Curteis, playwright, 62; Lord Dahrendorf, Warden, St Antony's College, Oxford, 68; Mr Glenn Ford, actor, 81; Dr Michael Goldstein, Vice-Chancellor, Coventry University, 58; Sir Irvine Goulding, former High Court judge, 87; Mr Joseph Heller, novelist, 74; Mr W. Leonard Hyde, former president, Leeds Permanent Building Society, 83; Professor Philip King, sculptor, 63; Miss Joanna Lumley, actress, 51; Sir Bruce McPhail, managing director, P & O, 58; Mr Julian Mitchell, writer and playwright, 62; Mr Bo Nilsson, composer, 60; Air Cdr Dame Felicity Pease, first Director, WRAF, 84; Mr Sonny Ramadhin, former West Indies cricketer, 68; Sir Bob Reid, chairman, London Electricity, 63; Sir Lindsay Ring, former Lord Mayor of London, 83; Col Sir Grenville Spratt, former Lord Mayor of London, 70; Miss Usha Stubbs, actress, 60; Miss Wendy Toye, theatrical producer, 80; Professor Richard Welbourn, Emeritus Professor of Surgical Endocrinology, Royal Postgraduate Medical School, London University, 78; Admiral Sir John Woodward, former Commander-in-Chief, Naval Home Command, 65.

Anniversaries

Births: Joseph Addison, diarist and essayist, 1672; Jules-Adolphe Aimé-Louis Breton, painter, 1837. Deaths: John Dryden, poet, 1700; David Livingstone, missionary and explorer, 1873. On this day: the Union of Scotland and England was proclaimed, 1707; in New York, the Empire State Building was opened, 1931. Today is May Day (Labour Day) and the Feast Day of St Amator or Amator, St Briceus or Breicus, St Joseph the Worker, St Peregrine Laziosi, St Sigismund of Burgundy and St Theodore of Narbonne.

Schools

King's College School, Wimbledon King's College School, Wimbledon celebrates today the centenary of its move from King's College in the Strand with a Service of Thanksgiving in Westminster Abbey. Among the guests will be the Principal of King's College, Professor Arthur Lucas, and other representatives of the college. The Right Rev Roy Williamson, Bishop of Southwark, will give the address. James Butler, Captain of School, and Mr Robin Reeve, the Head Master, will read the lessons. Prayers and intercessions will be led by members of the Junior and Senior Schools. The Jubilee will be sung to a setting composed for the service by Michael Zev Gordon, Old Boy of the school.

صكرا من الرحمن

Yes, quite a long embrace. How was it for you?

Finally, it's over. The foreplay has been strenuous and perhaps a little laboured, but today at last comes relief. Today you get to do your civic duty, to have your way with the politicians rather than the other way around. Or (since you have the choice) you might not. You might choose to pass up the once-in-every-five-years chance to tip your weight into the balance. Today we'll set aside how you vote (or not), and instead consider whether it – this slightly more protracted than usual date with democracy – was good for you (or not).

It has been a campaign where many people got their *enrui* in first. Issues, personalities, party formations could all have been equally well displayed within three weeks. Even if an informal contest had not been running since last autumn, six weeks is too long. We do not need to test politicians' stamina, or their capacity to leap in and out of helicopters, buses and automobiles dozens of times in a day. Yet fixed-term parliaments – a demand of electoral reformers since the Chartists – would not get round the problem, because then the whole parade drags on for a couple of years, as the constant campaigning that goes on in the United States shows. Would a future prime minister be tempted to extend the formal period again? It's unlikely: if he becomes an ex-prime minister, John Major will have to live with his regrets.

But the length of the campaign has not been the only complaint. Some people are worried that democracy is being tainted by the slick professionalism of modern campaigning. Spinners have been busier than spiders, and people are moaning that the whole business has been so packaged and controlled that it's not real. Oh no, the lament goes up, American superficiality has finally destroyed our fine old hustings traditions.

That is an understandable anxiety, but mostly, thank goodness, unfounded. Professional campaigning is a natural result of multiplying media outlets. And multiplying media outlets have given voters more opportunity to listen to, challenge, question, laugh at, weep over what politicians say and think than at any time in the history of our parliamentary democracy. John Major's complaint yesterday that the media did not allow him to get the message over would be laughable if it were not pathetic. The truth is that people have been soaked repeatedly from head to foot with the issues for the past many months, and forcibly ducked and drenched for the past six weeks.

For all the stage management of events, the campaign seems at times to have been nothing but the aggressive quizzing of leaders. It has not just been the public's proxies in the shape of television and radio journalists asking

lively questions in real time. The public themselves have had direct access in a variety of phone-ins and audience participation shows. All the right questions have at one time and another been asked and, more or less adequately, answered.

The idea that somehow the system has conspired to deny access to the "real issues" is thoroughly disproved by the energetic presence of the single-theme parties. Sir James Goldsmith has done the electorate sterling service in one sense, at least: that portion of it that thinks Europe the great matter has an opportunity to exercise its choice.



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Anarchists, clowns, anti-abortionists, and levitators have their choices, too.

A fashionable cry lately has been "none of the above". We worry about the apathy of our post-Thatcher youth, the ones who slump back and say they don't want to vote, oh no, because it's all a lot of *cojones*. A set of self-appointed generational spokespeople has proclaimed its disaffection. What's new? Young people always have registered less and voted less and doubtless always will – for the good reason that they have more pressing calls on their time. There has been detectable, none the less, an uncomfortable whingeing

tone in the vox pops collected by us and other media from young people. It suggests elections are like a visit to a burger outlet where, when a triple-decker with fries is not on the menu, a keening note of self-pity is sounded. But parties are more than hucksters, just as citizens are more than consumers. If none of the above, where are the new parties that would reflect what young people say are their concerns; where are the youthful advocates of those institutional reforms that would allow new political formations to flourish?

Modern Britain is not Aristotle's Athens, where the citizens can be expected to gather, figuratively, on the hillside to debate and decide the fate of the *polis*. Yet enthusiasts for gadgetry suggest there are ways in which people can, from the comfort of their armchairs, zap into democratic participation. Government by plebiscite is on our doorsteps. (All parties favour a referendum on a single currency. Labour picks up an old Michael Heseltine suggestion that local authorities conduct polls before they decide their budgets. Promising, this, isn't it?) Meanwhile, nearer home, one of the results of the reforms in public service management in recent years – by no means all of them Thatcherite inspiration – has been to encourage local political activity around schools, hospitals and housing estates. In other words, there is no shortage of democratic opportunity.

What about democratic will? The acid test is election turnout. In most parts of the country, the forecast is for a sunny spring day. Last time round, in 1992, some 78 per cent of eligible voters turned out, a magnificent figure considering the proportion of people on the electoral rolls who are aged, infirm or just plain indifferent. Our prediction for today is that that total will be exceeded. British democracy can certainly improve, but it's alive and kicking. Give it a go.

Public asset: please queue

In season, the pony path up Ben Nevis gets heavily congested, the sides of the mountain erode and the summit becomes a rubbish dump. The peak exemplifies the classic problem of free access to a public facility leading to destruction of the asset. (We report today another example: the threat to fish stocks in the southern oceans.) The textbook response is to charge, limiting access by price. But Ben Nevis can hardly be fenced off, with guards in Fort William and along Glen Nevis stopping climbers coming up the back way. A possible solution is a new tourist slogan: "Get away from it all in Scotland: queue to climb a mountain."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Whoever wins, taxes will have to go up

Sir: Gavyn Davies (28 April) is normally such a level-headed commentator that it is disappointing to find him indulging in wishful thinking. But his argument that taxes will not need to rise after the election really does not pass muster.

Mr Davies says, and it is hard to disagree, that it is very hard to imagine a Labour chancellor sticking to the very low planned growth figures for public spending. He then argues that this is not really a problem because the Government is assuming that the public finances would go into a budget surplus of 2 per cent of GDP in 2001-2, the last year of the next parliament. If the new chancellor set a budget deficit of 1 per cent of GDP – which would meet the "golden rule" of public finance whereby the Government should only borrow for capital investment – then he would be able to add 3 per cent of GDP to public spending, or some £27bn. And if this is spread over five years, the growth rate of spending can go up to 2 per cent.

There are two problems with this argument. The first is that the Government has probably been over-optimistic about its revenue projections, because it has assumed that the economy will continue to grow at 2.5 per cent a year. A more realistic long-run growth path would probably be 2.2 per cent. So there will be less tax revenue than projected, even if the recent holes in VAT and excises are plugged.

The second problem is that the extra spending can only be spread over five years if borrowing is higher in the early years than is currently planned. This is not sensible, since the economy is already showing signs of overheating (with pay pressures rising, for example). A more relaxed fiscal stance would risk raising interest rates compared with what they would otherwise be. It would also risk raising the exchange rate, which is already more than 16 per cent higher than it was at the end of 1995, and is hurting many exporters. Such a dose of "Reaganomics" would impose a cost in terms of our long-run growth prospects.

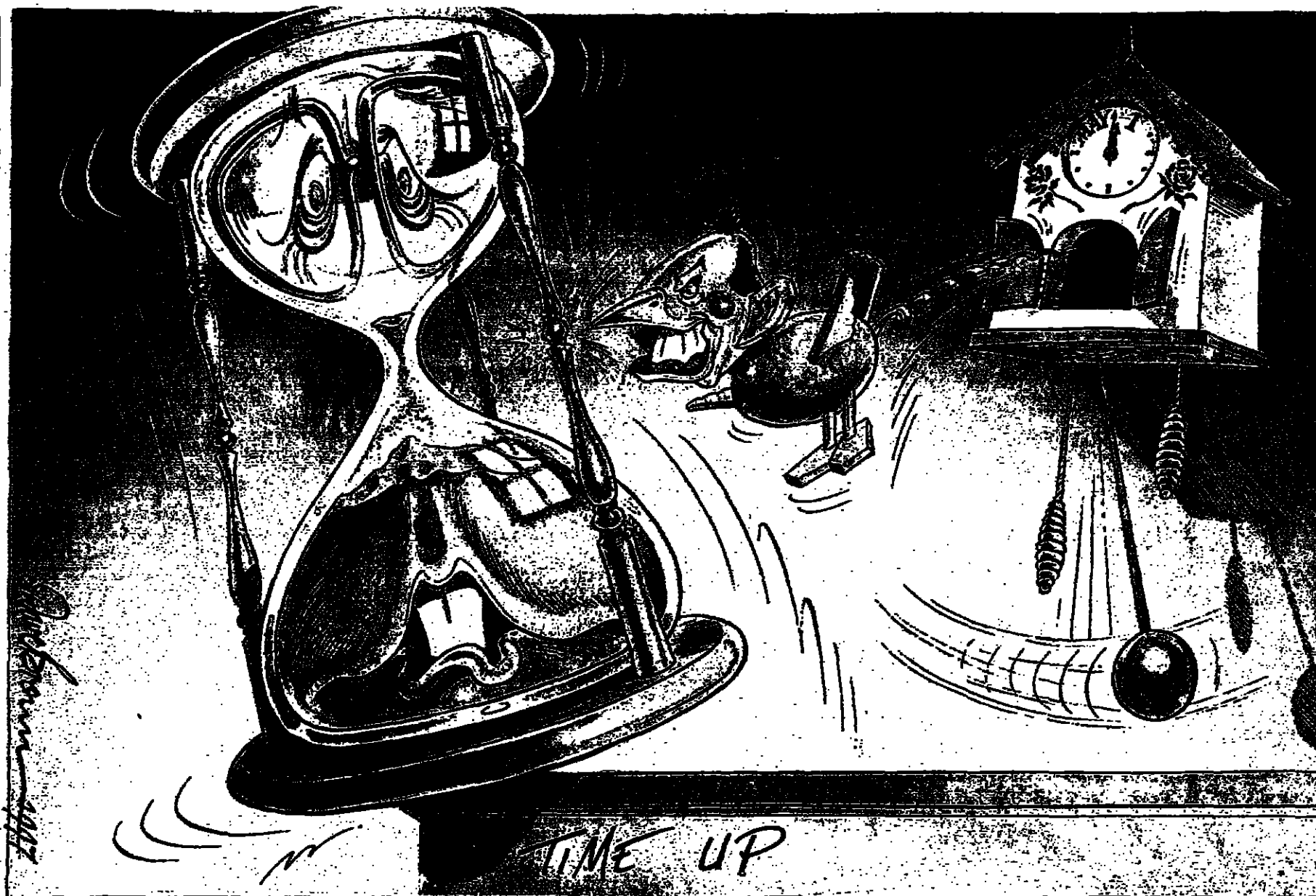
There is only one option which will deliver both credible spending plans and a better-balanced recovery which does not hit the tradable sector, and that is to finance extra public spending through higher taxes rather than more borrowing.

CHRISTOPHER HUHNE
Economics Director, IBCA Ltd
London EC2

Homeless suffer new regulations

Sir: Shortly before Parliament rose for the election the Government introduced regulations that would, if passed, limit housing benefit for single private-sector tenants under 60 to the cost of a single room with shared facilities.

As representatives of organisations working in the fields of housing and homelessness, we believe that these restrictions would lead to an increase in homelessness and would, by making it more difficult for people on benefit to find acceptable housing in the private sector, penalise both responsible landlords and prospective tenants.



The regulations were introduced in spite of the Social Security Advisory Committee's recommendation that no action should be taken until similar restrictions affecting people under 25, which were introduced last October, had been properly evaluated. We believe that to proceed without such an evaluation is at the very least imprudent, and could lead to considerable suffering among some of the poorest people in our society.

We therefore call upon whichever party is in government after 1 May to accept the SSAC's recommendation and withdraw these regulations until a proper evaluation of the effects of existing restrictions, both on individuals and on the private rented market, has been carried out.

DAVID WARNER
Director, Homeless Network
JON FITZMAURICE
Director, CHAR Housing Campaign
for Single People
CHRIS HOLMES
Director, Shelter
JOHN GOWAN
The Salvation Army
ALAN WARD
National Federation of Residential Landlords
London SW1

News reviewed

Sir: As I remove the note under my doorbell reading *No political canvassers please*, I wonder whether, having deprived us of news for six weeks, the media will make amends by providing résumés of what has been going on in the world.

K ROWAT
Sherborne, Dorset

How to pick the winners by name

Sir: With this election remarkable for lack of clear blue water between the two main parties and lack of clear blue touch-paper to ignite popular interest, voters might take a diversionary interest in the largely overlooked aspect, the frequency of the names of candidates.

First, they might provide us with good reason not to vote for some candidates. Most of the party leaders are loners, and do we really want loners? There is only one Major and one Ashdown though there are two Blairs. What future can these names have when faced with the 38 Smiths, the 30 Joneses, the 25 Brown(e)s, the 24 Williamses, the 20 Clark(e)s and the 19 Taylors?

And "big names" such as these have significant advantages over parties. They don't form restrictive cabals and they are untainted by the search for election funding. The table shows just how valuable a vote for a "name" can be, if you are fortunate enough to have one standing in your constituency. Look how representative some of the names are, in gender terms, and in terms of their personal values as measured by their membership of parties.

Not all perform well on all counts. The Joneses are excellent on gender, with women as 30 per cent of candidates. The Smiths, Williamses and Taylors all achieve

Name	Men	Women	Con	Lab	L-D	other
Smith	29	9 (24%)	5	10	8	15
Jones	24	9 (36%)	4	10	3	7
Brown(e)	24	1 (4%)	2	5	6	12
Williams	18	6 (25%)	3	7	2	6
Clark(e)	17	3 (15%)	4	8	2	6
Taylor	15	4 (21%)	5	5	5	4

more than 20 per cent of women. The Browns, on the other hand, display abnormally high sexism, with only 1 of their 25 candidates a woman.

Overall it is to the Taylors that we must look for best name at this election. They score 21 per cent of women and they are evenly spread in terms of party affiliation. By contrast, the Smiths and Browns are clearly over-representing minor parties, and the Clark(e)s have a real problem attracting Conservatives and Lib Dems.

The Taylors are also to be admired for their modest and reasonable ambition. Whereas the Joneses are seeking to increase their representation in the House of Commons from 8 to 30, the Smiths from only 6 to a massive 38 and the Williamses from a meagre 2 to an outrageous 24, the Taylors are going for staid growth from their present 6 MPs to a maximum of 19.

The only blot is evidence of some infighting. There are two Taylors head-to-head in two different constituencies. However, the Williamses are fighting each other in three constituencies. The Clark(e)s are the name to be

admired here, with 20 of them fighting in 20 different constituencies.

JOHN TAYLOR
Aber, Central Scotland

Truth in polls

Sir: Conrad Jameson's article about the opinion polls (24 April) makes no contribution whatsoever to aiding understanding why poll results taken at the same time sometimes diverge, or why the polls failed to predict the result of the 1992 election.

His thesis appears to be that so many respondents lie to pollsters as to make accurate polling impossible, and that this was the cause of the polls' error in 1992. The theory of lying respondents was investigated and specifically rejected by an exhaustive report following a two-year inquiry sponsored by the Market Research Society; it simply does not explain the facts. The explanations the MRS report endorses, with 160 pages of evidence – late swing, differential refusal and failures in the quota sampling – Jameson dismisses or ignores.

It is Jameson's explanation that is unsupported by the evidence, not that unanimously reached by the MRS Inquiry team of experts, which included independent academics and market researchers as well as pollsters.

ROBERT M WORCESTER
Chairman, Market and Opinion Research International
London SW1

Forgotten shame

Sir: I am surprised never to have seen in any British media what seems to me the best reason not to vote for John Major.

From 1992 to 1995 the worst and most numerous atrocities Europe has known since the Second World War happened in former Yugoslavia, notably in Bosnia. It is not an exaggeration to say that several Dublines were happening each day there. And concentration camps have been functioning before the world's eyes since 1992.

Europe's strongest military powers, Mitterrand's France and Major's UK, knew this better than anybody. They clearly had the technical means to stop these dreadful sufferings, whatever the White House's opinion. They have done nothing.

JEAN-MARIE GABUS
Geneva

If only...

Sir: Am I the only person who knows an awful lot of people who say they would vote Liberal Democrat if only they stood a chance?

BEVERLEY JOHNSTON
Welling, Kent

Fury at five minutes of voting

Sir: I am sick and tired of middle-aged, middle-class journalists passing judgement on my entire generation (Polly Toynbee: "Mrs Thatcher's airhead revenge", 28 April).

Young people are not all "airheads" and "know-nothings", and the decision not to vote is not a "fashion statement". As far as I can see (and as Ms Toynbee's article actually confirms), young people have got it right: real impact is made by demonstrating – not by putting a little mark on a little bit of paper once every five years.

The young people who'd risk anything for their beliefs are more "political" than the middle-aged man or woman who spends five minutes every five years trotting down to a polling station.

KEZIA HALLIDAY
London SE22

Training of surgeons at risk

Sir: I was glad that you highlighted some of the problems of the Health Service ("The truth about health: An ailing service is ignored by the politicians", 30 April).

I quite agree that most of the real problems in the NHS have not been addressed by either of the main parties. I would, however, like to draw your attention to the problem you did not mention. Future doctors will be trained under the extraordinary impression that all surgery is either an emergency or urgent. Our medical students and surgeons in training will get little, if any, experience in dealing with routine but usually very successful elective surgical conditions.

Professor JOHN A DORMANDY, FRCS
Department of Vascular Surgery
St George's Hospital
London SW17

Wanted posters

Sir: Where are the election posters and placards in people's windows and on their fences? I have hardly seen any at all. Does this mean that we are too embarrassed to tell our neighbours which political party we support, or have none of us made up our minds whom we are going to vote for? Are the pollsters taking account of this low level of self-advertising?

Dr J R LUBIN
London N20

Hurtful words

Sir: My most memorable quote from John Major is his brutal and chilling, "If it isn't hurting, it isn't working". I had just become redundant and a bit of sympathy would have gone a long way.

MICHAEL ATKINSON
High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

Saved by Scargill

Sir: As a lifelong supporter of both the Conservative Party, and British participation and leadership in Europe, I am in a quandary. Do I vote for Old Conservative (Major), New Conservative (Blair), or Lib Dem as the only pro-European party left? The truth is, no major party now reflects my views. At least the socialists can still vote for Scargill.

GRAHAM DON
Market Overton, Rutland

Shaken? Vote for the cocktail party



In an age of blended ideological flavours and shockingly decadent political habits, Paul Valley toasts the cocktail as the perfect accompaniment to election night



You could always lay in what the more vulgar Tory MPs nowadays tend to call a crate of champagne. But bubbly – crated, cased or solus – is a risky drink for election night. So much can go wrong, and when it does champagne loses its lustre and tastes of foolishness or presumption.

No, given the mix-and-match policies of modern political parties, a far more appropriate tipple for tonight is the cocktail. It has, after all, a respectable political history. Winston Churchill was big on martinis, as were his chief comrades in arms: Roosevelt – the man who poured the first legal martini in the United States at the end of the ill-starred Prohibition experiment – used to ply Stalin with them in what a presidential aide called the “four martinis and let’s have an agreement” era.

And the cocktail is something of an index of political mood. If cocktail consumption does not correlate exactly with down-turns in the economy, it does seem to have a link with “feelgood factor” or rather the lack of it. Think of the Twenties – socially roaring, but ending in economic depression. Or the sophisticated Thirties, blithely frothing towards world war. Just as sales of chocolate soar during a recession, so the cocktail flourishes when people most need compensatory cheer, small comforts bourgeois in troubled times. That’s my theory, anyway.

Salvatore Calabrese agrees. He is the chief bartender at that favoured hang-out of wealthy Americans, The Lanesborough hotel in London (before the Thatcher era it was, aptly enough, an NHS hospital). Agreeing

with the customer is part of the armoury of skills a good barman must possess. He also disagrees: “Cos if people only drank them during the bad times, I’d be out of business.” Which, thankfully, the best martini-maker in the capital, is not.

But then the cocktail has always been a sign of contradiction, a mark of simultaneous frivolity and finesse. “I must get out of these wet clothes and into a dry martini,” wagged some sophisticated in the Thirties. Three decades on Dave Brubeck’s sax player could find no way of describing the tone he was attempting to extract except by saying that he aimed to sound like a dry martini. Sgr Calabrese cannot dispute that since both quotes come from the neat little book, full of splendid period illustrations, he has just produced called *Classic Cocktails* (Prion Books), which charts the history of the admixture.

It is full of improbable anecdotes about the genesis of the term – legends about cocks’ feathers, about a chemist from New Orleans (*coquetier* is French for egg cup), about the drinking ceremonies of a Mexican king. There are almost as many rival claims as there are for the provenance of the martini (the town of Martinez in California, various Italian barmen in New York hotels, or the Martini & Henry rifle used by the British army between 1871 and 1891).

Whatever, the history of the

cocktail, and in particular the martini, is the history of our social mores. The word may have been first recorded in 1806 in the *Balance and Columbian Repository*, and mixtures like Black Velvet may have been traced to 1861, when at Brooks’s in London a barman coloured the club champagne with Guinness in mourning for Prince Albert, but it was a political act that defined the drink. Prohibition, which ran in the United States from 1921 to 1933, was the mother of the cocktail. Some 70 per cent of today’s cocktails were created during the era of the speak-easy in which men like Al Capone and Joe Kennedy, father of John F. made their reputations and money.

And so it went. The Fifties was the decade of the three-martini lunch (as well as, not instead of) and the Sixties – along with Carnaby Street, Kubrick and Cointreau – brought into fashion the Brandy Alexander (brandy, *crème de cacao* and cream) into the height of swinging sophistication. Then the film of *Casino Royale* popularised the massive solemnism of James Bond’s vodka martini “shaken not stirred” – a thought that horrified purists who drank it stirred so that, as Somerset Maugham once put it, “the molecules [of the gin and vermouth] lie sensuously on top of one another”.

But then came Thatcherism, with its shabbiness and champagne, Lawsonism with its boom and

FLOATING VOTER

An Election Night Cocktail

created for ‘The Independent’ by Salvatore Calabrese head cocktail barman at the Lanesborough Hotel, London and author of *Classic Cocktails* (Prion Books, £9.99)

1. Mix a few drops Grenadine, 2cl Fraise du Bois liqueur, 1 cl Cointreau and a little lemon juice. Shake. Pour into a high-ball glass full of ice.
2. Pour in a mixture of fresh orange and mango juices. Trickle over a bar spoon so the yellow layer floats on the red.
3. In a separate glass mix 2.5 cl of Beefeater gin and a few drops of blue curacao. Float the mixture on the Lib Dem layer.
4. Garnish with a strawberry (very British).
5. Serve with three straws, one in each layer, to enable all three to be tasted together while keeping the red, yellow and blue distinct. The Tories get the short straw but Signor Calabrese is too diplomatic to point this out.

burgundy and Majorism with its downturn and designer beer. Until Kenneth Clarke’s feel-good boom, the martini was almost extinct, save in sanctuaries like Salvatore’s. “It’s really on the up now,” says Alex Turner, a director of the improbable London Academy of Bartending, which opened last year and already has produced 100 graduates. “This rise is nationwide, with almost every big city now boasting at least one designer bar where for a fiver or so the feverishly fashionable can partake.”

In the mould of Manchester’s Dry 201, London has the ultra-hip Euro bar Riki Tik which specialises in Woo-Woo (a cocktail of vodka, peach

Spirits, sex and sin: bartenders in Havana (above), a naughty postcard from Paris (left), and a 1929 French poster (centre) testify to the exotic attraction of the cocktail to Americans such as WC Fields (below), who drank them for breakfast

really on account of my deeply unhip corduroy suit. (I am in good company here; Riki Tik once turned away Tarantino himself for wearing a suit, though probably not corduroy). Undaunted I ploughed on to the Atlantic Bar and Grill to watch the substances slipping down the throats of bare-backed women, pony-tailed men wearing silk suits and unseemly characters who looked as if they fled Iran when the Shah fell. The atmosphere had that same mixture of spirits, sex and sin which characterised the age of the flapper, only without its subtlety. The Twenties was a time of innuendo. Its cocktails bore cheeky names like Knickerbocker. Temptation and Bosom Caresser; its advertisements were full of delightful ambiguity.

But if Marlene Dietrich liked men who like martinis, at J W Johnson’s in Manchester, where 20 per cent of drinks sold are now cocktails, they are altogether more direct. One of their best-sellers is a Screaming Multiple Orgasm. You might think that the fun is in asking for one rather than drinking its mix of Kahlua, Baileys, Amaretto and cream. You would be wrong. You can get it in a glass in the bar upstairs but in the nightclub below the customer can lie spreadeagled on the bar and have the waiter of her choice administer it in a way of which readers of a respectable newspaper might prefer to remain ignorant.

Back at The Lanesborough, I settle for a White Lady (gin, Cointreau and fresh lemon juice). Sgr Calabrese is pondering his Floating Voter, an election night special (see recipe, left). “I think it will work – red, blue and yellow. That is sweetness with Labour, the non-alcoholic virginity of the Lib Dems and strength for the Conservatives.” I am thinking of an old epigram: One cocktail is just right, two is too many and three is never enough. Was it the same, I wondered, with terms of office?

“It will taste good,” Sgr Calabrese pronounces. It may well do on the night. But what about the after-effects? A five-year hangover is a thought to be reckoned with.

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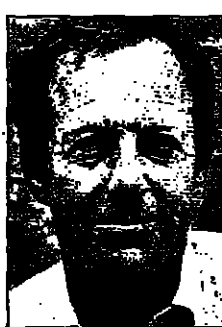
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Your last-ditch guide to election clichés

What kind of an election has this been as far as clichés are concerned? A bad one. They have come thick and fast. In what have these clichés come? In droves. Are the politicians wholly to blame? No. The media must also bear. What must they bear? The blurt. The blurt of what? The blame. But now the election battle is almost over? Yes. We are now almost in sight of that stick stuck in the ground to signify the end of the race. What stick might that be? The winning post. But to get to the winning post, what bend-free area do we first have to cover? The home straight.

After that the winner will be home. He will. What else will he be, apart from home? Dry. Home and dry. Who does everyone expect to win? Labour. Barring what? A last-minute upset. What would that be? A miracle now. By what geological freak is Labour expected to win? A landslide. And if they don’t, what will we have on our hands? A major upset. And the biggest surprise since who beat who? Truman beat Dewey. Good. If Labour do win, will it be pretty? No, it will be handsomely. Will it be a dirty sweep? No. A clean sweep. But if Labour don’t win, what then?



Miles Kingston

Well, I suppose the Tories will win. No, no, I mean that if the Tories win, it will be a turn-up for something, won’t it? Yes, sorry. Turn-up for the book. And one in which optical organ? One in the eye ...

For whom? For the pundits. Who will have to eat a folk dish known as ...? Humble pie? Good. By whom are these pundits appointed? By no one. Or rather, by themselves. They are self-appointed pundits. Exactly. Although the newspapers are their ... Their paymasters? I think so. Have the newspapers themselves declared which party they are in favour of? Oh, yes. They have all nailed their colours. To which important part of the boat have they nailed their colours? The mast. To what are they flocking? Mr Blair’s standard. Has John Major given up? Never. He will not give in till the bitter end. He says that it is all to play for. There are some

things he will never say. Such as? Die. He will never say die. But surely even John Major knows that 10 Downing Street will soon have a new something? A new tenant? Correct. In what internal organ does Mr Major know this? His heart of hearts. But he will not give up ... Without a battle royal? Without a fight to the death? Yes, yes, we know that. But when will he not give up? Oh, I see. He will not give up until the eleventh hour. Later. His dying breath? Not as late as that. The final whistle? Excellent. So is it all over? Yes. Bar something? Sorry – bar the shouting. Thank you. You’re welcome.

صكنا من الامن

So farewell then, John Major, man of shadows

We were gathered together in the sight of the Voter for the last time to bid farewell to our Prime Minister – a requiem for his passing. He is not much of a churchgoer, but looking at the relevant words of the *Book of Common Prayer*, I wondered if pausing in the wings for yesterday's press conference he might murmur, "Lord, let me know mine end and the number of my days that I may be certified how long I have to live." Or perhaps, "Deliver me from mine offences and make me not a rebuke unto the foolish."

This was the last of some 120 morning press conferences for all three parties. Here we were at the very end, so might he give us a sign, a word, something to move us a little? But no. How like the man to leave us with nothing, no last-minute inspiration, no sudden lifting of his game just as the light fades. No, there was no hint of tragedy at his fall – the birds still sang.

The man has a limitless ability to disappoint. Who knows, perhaps tomorrow when it's all over and far too late, at last he will find words to touch us, words to match the occasion. But probably not, certainly nothing as magnificent as Margaret Thatcher's hot tears of outrage as she left Downing Street for the last time.

History will not be kind to John Major. Our children in 50 years' time will scratch their heads and try to remember who came in the fallow years between Thatcher and Blair. What was his name? What did he do? Yet the remarkable fact remains that this mediocre man, devoid of vision, has indeed held on to power for six long years. Not much loved and much mocked, when he speaks now we see Rory Bremmer blinking, more real than the shadowy man himself.

How did John Major do it? He was a mainstay of the Thatcher years; hardly a poll tax protester, yet when the blame was handed out he wasn't there. When his ministers signed papers to let innocent businessmen go to jail for selling arms to Iraq, he wasn't there either, not him. Honest John was Slippery John. Sleaze? He knew nothing. Unsavory funds for his party? No one told him. Sacrifice Britain's interests abroad for the sake of appeasing the lunatic right? Of course not. Whip up dangerous Europhobia in the electorate in the vain hope of victory? That's politics. But it was he who took us into the ERM, and he who fell so ignominiously out of it he never could dodge that mighty knock-out blow, and his poll ratings never recovered.

No, he wasn't Honest John, or Mr Nice Guy, but he was lucky. And despite his lumbering verbal infelicity, he had the footwork of a mountain goat. Only the deep rift in his party kept him in office, dividing and ruling. Standing with a foot on either side of a widening crevasse is a well-known posture for retaining power – each side hating him a little less than the enemy. But it is neither a dignified nor glo-



Polly Toynbee

Grey, hollow and lacking in vision till the end – history will not be kind to the Prime Minister after his six years in power

rious role for the history books, as Harold Wilson's reputation shows. There will be precious little sentimentalising at his wake.

The past six weeks have been a long deathwatch. The grey man pinned his hopes on making the people love him; instead he has been stripped bare, with the polls hardly nudging since the first day.

Why? Because in the end the cameras do not lie. Night after night we have seen him and his party flounder in the harsh glare of the television lights. And voters have not liked what they have seen: a party riven by a multitude of candidates bribed by a businessman to disobey their leaders and print their own rebellious anti-European manifestos. A leader who could not escape 18 years of blame for everything anyone thinks is wrong with anything. A leader who embraced sleaze personified when he endorsed Neil Hamilton. And Labour's well-aimed hammer blows of 22 Tax Rises prevented any last chance of another Double Whammy fight-back. The man never stood a chance.

If the evil that men do lives after them, the charges against Major are legion: the deepening divide between the poor and the rich, the odour of corruption in the air and the humiliation he has inflicted on us by his behaviour abroad.

But lest we inter the shreds of good with his bones, there was one moment in the campaign – only one – when John Major reached for something better, a rare and tantalising glimpse of the leader some of us once thought he could be. It was that day in mid-campaign when at last he faced down his own revolting candidate and put as neat and eloquent a case as anyone has ever made for why we might want to join the single currency. It was an act of bravery, firmness and, yes, a little passion – all the things his leadership has lacked. Now, at this eleventh hour, would the man come into his own? No, it was only the flash of a firecracker, not the kindling of a fire. But it was a sad reminder that in his very first days there was a chance that he might become the great healer of Thatcherite abrasions, a good manager, a good European, the classless one-nation leader who now sounds so hollow.

For Labour, the dark years are over. Even now Prince Hal is casting off the shabby and unprincipled clothes required for fighting general elections. Early tomorrow morning he will step out in his true guise into a world that is his oyster. He can be anything that he wants to be, and now we wait to see what that is. He travels so light, with a majority so great, that he has no excuse for failing.

How easy it should be for him to shine over the bleached bones of this dead regime. How easy to eclipse John Major in an instant, our underdog posture for retaining power – each side hating him a little less than the enemy. But it is neither a dignified nor glo-

The who's who of Blair's top team

by Donald Macintyre



DAVID ROSE

The territory isn't uncharted, but the maps are pretty moth-eaten. If Labour wins tonight, Tony Blair will be only the second Labour leader since Clement Attlee to win a general election. And unlike either Harold Wilson or Attlee he will know nothing of Cabinet government from the inside. Yet by the end of tomorrow he will have laid down the essential building blocks of an administration likely, if the polls are anything to go by, to last well into the next century.

A Labour win will be a function of Blair's leadership and transformation of a party that it had been possible to doubt would ever win an election again. No leader has ever, at least in opposition, put his or her personal stamp on a party in the way he has. The question now is, can he run the country as firmly and distinctively?

This will depend on many things, among them the Cabinet he appoints immediately, how he can make the machinery of government work for him, and his own will for change and radicalism.

The Cabinet first. In theory, at least, Blair faces one constraint that would have appalled Attlee or Wilson: a crazy party rule which prescribes that the elected members of the Shadow Cabinet are appointed to the Cabinet. Crazy, because even when it was introduced during the high tide of Bennism in the early 1980s the Shadow Cabinet had only 12 members, leaving any prime minister the absolute right to choose over half his Cabinet. Now the elected members, plus all the *ex-officio* posts, including Leader and Deputy Leader, come to 27, and there are only 22 paid Cabinet posts. So something will have to give. Shadow Cabinet members will all be offered posts but it just isn't credible to assume they will all be in the Cabinet.

If there is a victory, Gordon Brown (Chancellor), Robin Cook (Foreign Office) and John Prescott (probably Environment and Transport as well as Deputy Prime Minister) are likely to be appointed tomorrow. Prescott has won massive brownie points for loyalty and energy in the election campaign, so the foregoing are shaping up like a possible "Big Four" of a Labour government.

Jack Straw will be confirmed as Home Secretary; David Blunkett will go to Education. Margaret Beckett, now indisputably a big player, will prob-

ably also be confirmed at Trade and Industry. Mo Mowlam is set for Northern Ireland.

Beyond that it isn't easy to be certain. Alastair Darling, a campaign star and an unelected member of the Shadow Cabinet, looks likely to be in the Cabinet. Donald Dewar could well become Scottish Secretary, charged with the massive task of seeing through the Devolution Bill, with the present incumbent, George Robertson, a candidate for Defence. Despite reports to the contrary, Clare Short may be safe with Cabinet responsibility for international development.

The Welshman Paul Murphy is heavily tipped for the Minister of State role currently taken in the political Northern Ireland talks. Peter Mandelson has delivered what looks – pending a result – like a hugely successful election campaign. But he won't be in the Cabinet,

and won't be a ministerial "chief of staff". He will be a Minister of State – possibly under Cook, or elsewhere. The one certainty is that there will be no ideological bloodbath.

So how does Blair impose himself, and a collective strategy, on a government full of potentially warring ministers fighting turf wars? Semi-institutionalisation of an inner group drawn from among the Friday appointees would help. There might be areas they would find it difficult to agree to, but once they had it, wouldn't he find it to impose such an agreement on the rest of the Cabinet. Also, giving Blair's mentor, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, chairmanship of key Cabinet committees would ensure that a deeply trusted lieutenant was there to enforce the Prime Minister's will.

But ministers are only part of the story. Expect muffled

squeals from the Civil Service when Jonathan Powell is confirmed as principal private secretary to the Prime Minister, replacing Alex Allan, who is likely to depart pretty swiftly for Australia as High Commissioner. Like Alastair Campbell, who will be the PM's press secretary, Powell will be coming in as a political appointee.

But private secretaries, unlike press secretaries have always previously come from inside the Civil Service. (William Clark, Macmillan's press secretary, and Joe Haines, who worked for Harold Wilson, both came from outside the Civil Service.) And this is a key job: Powell will be an unrivalled gatekeeper to the PM. His big brother, Charles, wielded huge influence on Margaret Thatcher's behalf, and he was technically only the No 2. However, the squeals may be quite short-lived. Powell is a civil

servant rather than a politico by trade, and worked in the British Embassy in Washington when he was recruited by Blair. And there is nothing in writing to stop this happening.

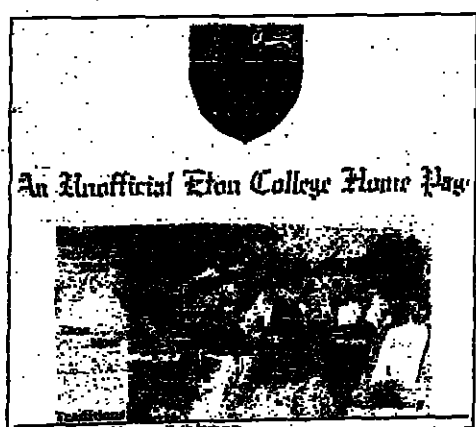
Blair's view is that the quality, energy and trustworthiness of the people around him is more important than the machinery itself. Nevertheless, there has been one strong hint of a possible change.

The book *The Blair Revolution*, which Mandelson published last year with Roger Liddle, drew attention first to the need for the Treasury to have a broader role "than merely carving up public expenditure". Which under Brown it will certainly have. It also drew attention to the fact that while No 10 – "a town house rather than a stately home" – could only accommodate a small staff, through the green baize door is the Cabinet Office, which he implied should be more at the disposal of the Prime Minister. "The Cabinet Office should be more akin to the department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet... acting more in future like a policy-making permanent secretary than as a business manager and minute-taker."

Sir Robin Butler – who irritated Blair's office by an over-zealous briefing this week on the mechanics of a government handover – is due for retirement as Cabinet Secretary by next year. When he is replaced – Andrew Turnbull at the Department of Environment is one of several possible candidates – the role of the Cabinet Office could be changed.

Even strong prime ministers find it difficult from time to time to impose their will on government. In his book on the British constitution, Ferdinand Mount, who was head of Margaret Thatcher's Policy Unit in the early 1980s, complains that it was an uphill struggle even for her. But Blair hasn't come this far to let his project be dissipated in Whitehall backbiting.

It looks as if the electorate has been utterly unimpressed by complaints about New Labour's lack of government experience. Perhaps, after all, if Blair had been born a Labour insider he wouldn't have even attempted what he has succeeded in doing to date. His will isn't exactly in doubt. Atty was a long-time member of the wartime political establishment when he became prime minister; Wilson had been a civil servant as well as a Cabinet minister. It may be a more positive advantage than anyone expects for Blair to have been neither.



The old-school Thai who left US babes lusting after a royal Etonian stud-muffin

john walsh



away from the Member's Lawn where we stood but, hope as we might, no trace of gibbon, chimp or mandrill interrupted the toing and froing of literary types. Across the patio steps, demure waitresses carried canapés – trays full of mini-pizzas, tiny samosas and lines of amphetamine sulphate – no, all right, I made that up. But everywhere you went, people were making awful jokes about planes, lavatories, heroin ("You mean this is a Bring Your Own Drugs party?" a woman asked beside me. "Shouldn't they have said that on the invite?") and Brian Mawhinney, who shopped Will Self to the police. "Is Brian Mawhinney pompous or sanctimonious?" asked John McVicar, the former desperado. "I rather think the latter." When not conversing like a rural dean, McVicar evinces a nicely old-fashioned line in hatred, especially for the hectoring delivery of politicians (most especially the way Tony Blair says "Look..."). This being the first *à fresco* launch party of the year, there were babies everywhere, most notably Ms Fernanda Amis (six months, cupid-bow mouth) who slumbered throughout the proceedings while her parents Martin and Isabel held court under the trees. Lisa St Aubin de Teran, popularly known as Lisa St Pancras de Trancras, was there, and Ian McEwan, and Ed Victor the super-agent, and Cyril Connolly's daughter Cressida, and Ian Hargreaves in his Cosa Nostra black shirt, and Maureen Freely and Hugo Williams and Joan Smith... David Reynolds of Bloomsbury (publisher of *Great Apes*) was ecstatic about his recent acquisition of a cache of 20,000 letters written by Hunter S Thompson, king of gonzo journalism and Will Self's spiritual godfather. The author himself, six-foot-five in a serious suit, loomed about looking as though, on the whole, he'd had enough of media

people and journalists for a while. When toasted by his publisher, Liz Calder, he brandished a copy of the book and said, "This is a moral tract without a conclusion. Work it out for yourselves, cunts." It's puzzling to watch this intelligent and charming man displaying the conviction that he absolutely must live up to the image that the world and his own career have imposed on him.

Last night saw the most controversial bit of Coming Out on American screens since the arrival of Rosemary's satanic Baby. It was the moment in *Ellen*, the weekly comedy series, when the eponymous heroine suddenly revealed to the world that she was a lesbian. Everyone in America has known about this revelation for several months; it has been in all the papers and debated briskly on talk shows. In fact it's such a non-revelation that ABC, the television company responsible, had to bolster the episode by pulling in a handful of extra stars (Oprah Winfrey, Demi Moore, kd lang) to guarantee healthy viewing figures. What's more interesting than the sexual orientation of the leading lady, however, is the argy-bargy in the advertising world. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the major car companies which would normally advertise in this slot have been fleeing like rabbits before any mention of the L-word. Chrysler, who took the commercial slot in previous episodes of *Ellen*, said they wanted to avoid a "highly polarised or emotional environment", poor darlings. General Motors wouldn't touch it with a 10-foot steering column; Ford made a handbrake turn and skeddaddled.

Then Volkswagen stepped in. Not only would they accept the dodgy hinterland between the lesbian outpourings, they said, they would take the opportunity to unveil a new advertisement. And now the whole universe of American culture-watchers are pondering what it means. The advert, for a VW Golf GL, shows two laid-back guys at traffic lights, spotting an abandoned old armchair. One of them likes it, stows it in the back of the Golf and they drive off again. Further on, they discover it's horribly smelly. They stop, dump it and drive off. That's it. Does it have some sly association with Ellen's discovery? Are the two chaps gay? Is the battered armchair a symbol of domesticity, to be embraced and then discarded? Or is it an image of sexual experiment, to be tried out (so warm, so squishy, so comfy, so apparently familiar) but found wanting? Only a Media Studies seminar at Berkeley could straighten this one out.

It is surprising to find that Eton College – that citadel of all things modern, go-ahead and cutting-edge – has no web site to call its own on the Internet. It's got a gigantic computer network, sure, and the capacity to e-mail the rest of the world, but no actual database of facts 'n' info about the nation's most famous school. So it must have been quite a shock when one of the computer beaks, surfing listlessly around the globe the other day, discovered the existence of something called "The Unofficial Eton Web Page". Further enquiries revealed a tale of opportunism, lost and transatlantic intrigue. The site had been established, the college discovered, in Los Angeles by a 33-year-old Americanised Thai former male-nurse called Wtn, who developed an obsession about Eton after reading *Stand By Your God*, a memoir of life among the boaters, fives courts, wall games and people called "mtutor", written by the novelist Paul Watkins. Mr Watkins, whose narratives of Hemingwayesque derring-do (Calm at Sunset, Calm at Dawn, In the Blue Light of African Dreams) are currently in the hands of the Hollywood film studios, possesses the kind of reckless good looks that make people swoon over Hugh Grant, and it's a possible that the impressionable Wtn had a slight, manly crush on him. At all events, the site was set up, and the Internet hummed with data, as Old Etonians were grilled for information about their beloved alma mater, for the benefit of gawping Los Angelenos. Then Wtn got through, via e-mail, to a genuine, living, breathing 16-year-old Eton scholar, actually at the college, with whom he proceeded to embellish his web pages. Together they constructed a virtual reality tour of the school, a glossary of slang "chambers", "the hill", "getting a ticket" and other vital bits of Etoniana. It was then that the Eton

beaks discovered the existence of Wtn's web, but rather than hit the roof, they approved of it. With remarkable phlegm, they even contacted Wtn to correct a few factual errors. But then they discovered something of which they simply could not approve. Can you guess? It was the Comment page of the web site, where e-mails arrive from all over the world. And an embarrassing number of American ones bore the same message: "I want to shag Prince William." Ever since a picture of the Prince of Wales's elder son had been included on one of the web pages, the female college population of California had gone into a collective frenzy. "How," one girl wrote with a trace of desperation, "can I get into his class?" It was too much for Eton. They contacted Wtn. Look here, old boy, they said. Won't do. Bit near the knuckle. Bit infra dig. Can't have gels from the dominions expressin' interest in 13-year-old royalty. Close down that bit, would you, there's a good fellow... And amazingly, the old-school Thai did just that – leaving hordes of lust-crazed American babes frantically contacting any Old Etonians with an e-mail address, asking for news of their hero. I've a print-out of one such communication in front of me. "How can I get in touch with Prince William?" it breathes. "He's such a stud-muffin."

The first thing to say about Will Self's book launch is that there weren't any primates there. The novel is called *Great Apes*, the party venue was Regent's Park Zoo, the Monkey House is hardly a banana-throw

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Formula One flotation plans stalled

Michael Harrison

Bernie Ecclestone has postponed plans to float his Formula One Grand Prix motor racing business in London and New York this summer and has instructed his advisers to examine the alternative of a private sale.

There are also doubts about the £2.5bn price tag put on the business when the flotation plans first surfaced two months ago. The sale, if it happens, is expected to put a significantly lower value on Formula One.

Mr Ecclestone does not intend to dispose of a controlling stake in the business.

The odds on Formula One being sold this calendar year are now reckoned to be even. Although flotation is still a candidate, the odds are said to be no more than 50:50 on a public offering as opposed to a private sale.

Part of the problem is timing and part of the problem is the fierce resistance to a flotation being encountered among a handful of the Grand Prix con-

structors, led by the Williams team.

Mr Ecclestone owns Formula One, which has the television rights to the 16 grand prix held each year and beamed to an audience of 400 million viewers. But the teams point out that Formula One would be nothing without their participation and are said to be pressing for a large slice of the action when Mr Ecclestone cashes up.

Were flotation to remain an option this side of the summer break, then Mr Ecclestone and

his financial advisers, the US investment bank Salomons, would need to press the button in the next week for there to be time to brief analysts, get research reports written and circulated, publish a prospectus and take Formula One on a roadshow of institutional investors on both sides of the Atlantic.

That means a flotation is now unlikely to take place until the autumn at the earliest. Meanwhile, the option of a trade sale is being given serious

consideration. Large numbers of interested parties, ranging from media companies to wealthy individuals, have expressed an interest in buying a stake in Formula One.

Mr Ecclestone is thought to have repaired the rift with the three teams yet to sign up to the so-called Concord agreement under which the constructors get a share of the television revenues generated by Formula One. Williams, Benetton and Tyrrell had been refusing to agree terms but Mr Ecclestone

is thought to have offered them more money without disadvantaging the other teams who have signed up.

However, they remain deeply unhappy at the prospect of Mr Ecclestone becoming a billionaire from any flotation.

Constructors are thought to be insisting they should emerge with the bulk of the share after the float.

"They are unhappy with the set-up, full stop. They just think the balance is all wrong here. No one is disputing Bernie's con-

tribution to raising Formula One's public image, but that does not give him the right to come away with most of the spoils," said one observer.

Formula One is one of several Ecclestone companies connected with the sport and earns huge, though undisclosed, revenues from the 16 yearly televised races. These are set to rise dramatically with the advent of digital pay-television.

In Germany, Mr Ecclestone's company has already done a rights deal with the DFL chan-

nel which will enable viewers to select their own camera angle from the cars, using equipment which is manufactured by another Ecclestone company, Formula One Promotions.

The prize, expected to be confirmed later this year, will be a formal pay-per-view alliance with BSkyB.

Mr Ecclestone began to exert his influence on Grand Prix racing in the late 1970s buying the now defunct Brabham team.

Comment, page 25

Co-op affair claims Hambros victim

Tom Stevenson and Nigel Cope

Peter Large, the Hambros corporate financier at the heart of the failed £1.2bn takeover bid by Andrew Regan for the Co-operative Wholesale Society, has asked to stand down from the bank while his role is investigated by solicitors Norton Rose. A report on the affair, commissioned by Hambros after discussions over the weekend with the Bank of England, is now expected to be pushed through by the end of the month.

Hambros said yesterday it had "agreed to a request from Mr Peter Large to be relieved of his executive responsibilities for the time being to enable him to concentrate upon giving full attention to the inquiry being undertaken by Norton Rose".

The withdrawal of Mr Large, which Hambros denied was a suspension of the banker, was part of the continuing fall-out from the Co-op affair which saw attention turning to the role of Schroders in the attempted takeover and the liquidation of Galileo, the vehicle set up for the bid.

Schroders yesterday admitted that three of its fund managers bought shares worth £11,000 in Lanica Trust on their own personal accounts last November, a month before its own small-

Schroders admitted the dealings in a letter to its institutional investment clients citing the "considerable amount of press coverage" of the CWS bid, some of which had mentioned Schroders as being an investor in Galileo. The bank said it deplored the use of any "illegal or improper practices", adding it was unhappy its name had been associated with such practices in any way.

It added that "At no time, either then or subsequently, has Schroders seen any confidential CWS documents." Last week a list of 17 companies, including

At no time, either then or subsequently, has Schroders seen any confidential CWS documents

Goldman Sachs, Hambros, Jupiter International, Lloyds Bank Registrars, Nomura, Price Waterhouse, Société Générale, UBS and JP Morgan were named in court as having received leaked documents.

News of the dealings emerged as Galileo, the vehicle set up by Mr Regan, was put into voluntary liquidation by its shareholders, Lanica, Schroders, stockbroker Killik & Co and the fund manager, Jupiter International. According to Jason Elles, a partner of Ernst & Young, the liquidator, Galileo's creditors,

mainly its professional advisers, will be repaid in full the £2m they are owed. There will also be an unspecified return to Galileo's shareholders, who invested £9.6m to cover the due diligence costs of the failed £1.2bn bid. Individual shareholders include David Evans, the Tory MP for Welwyn Hatfield. It is thought that the £600,000 invested in Galileo by Lanica Trust will not be returned.

However, the Co-operative Wholesale Society still intends to pursue Galileo for damages. A spokesman said: "The CWS intends to register its interest with Ernst & Young and will be lodging a contingency claim with them as creditors. The Galileo decision to go into insolvent liquidation is not surprising."

A spokesman for Schroders confirmed that one of the fund managers who had dealt on their own account was Andrew Broughton but declined to name the other two. He said they had complied with internal rules regarding share dealings, buying their shares through the firm and then notifying directors of Schroders Investment Management once it became clear that the funds they managed were likely to make an investment. The acquisition of 115,000 shares in Lanica was approved by an independent group of Schroders directors.

At Hambros, the Norton Rose investigation is expected to focus on when details of the deal were passed on to Sir Chips Keswick, the chairman of Hambros who wrote to CWS chief executive Graham Melmoth on Monday 21 April defending the bank's relationship with Mr Regan before performing an embarrassing volte-face just one week later.



Jazz theme: President Bill Clinton, a musician noted for other achievements, is reputed to be a user of Boosey saxophone reeds, like the great altoist before him, Charlie Parker

Boosey stake sale threatens independence

Tom Stevenson Financial Editor

Boosey & Hawkes's independence was thrown into doubt yesterday after its largest shareholder, the American Carl Fischer music publishing group, said it had put itself up for sale. Under Takeover Panel rules, any single offer for Fischer, which controls 45.3 per cent of Boosey's shares, would trigger a full bid for the British music publisher and instrument maker.

Fischer, which bought into Boosey in 1965 and has seen the value of its investment grow seventeen-fold in the meantime, is understood to have taken the decision to cash in its shareholding following the retirement of Hayden Connor, a family member, as chairman of Boosey. At yesterday's closing share price of 822p, up 30p, Fischer's stake would be worth almost £80m.

Although Fischer has instructed its financial adviser, Credit Suisse First Boston, to try to maximise proceeds by finding a single buyer for the whole company, including the Boosey holding, it is thought equally likely that it will end up placing the shares with a range of institutional investors.

That option, Boosey's preferred outcome, would improve the liquidity of its tightly held shares and maintain its independence stock market listing.

Boosey has been one of the stock market's biggest success stories over the past 10 years, with the value of its shares multiplying eightfold during that period on the back of rapidly growing profits from its instrument-making operations and royalties from its strong

catalogue of serious music composers, including Stravinsky, Bartok and Delius. Its sax reeds have been used by such jazz greats as Charlie Parker as well as musicians more renowned for other achievements, such as President Bill Clinton.

As a result of that rapid growth, the company's shares are highly rated, which is thought might discourage potential buyers for the whole business.

On a forward rating of 24 times earnings, the shares

Boosey & Hawkes



discount much of the company's growth potential and any bidder may be unwilling to pay another premium for control. Within instrument manufacturers possible bidders include Yamaha of Japan, which although it is the world leader has tended to concentrate on cheaper instruments than Boosey specialises in, and Steinway. The publishing interests might be attractive to a range of buyers, including EMI.

Last month, Boosey announced a 25 per cent jump in pre-tax profits to £7.7m for the year to December.

London house prices surpass 1989 peak

Diane Coyle Economics Editor

Prices in many areas of central London have passed the peak they set in 1989. Nationwide Building Society said yesterday. House prices nationally rose for the fourth month running in April, with the North-South gap widening further.

Philip Sanderson, head of research, said a shortage of homes coming on to the market was driving prices up. Several buyers were competing for any suitable property.

The election campaign had slightly dampened the level of housing market activity, but the property drought was most to blame for the low level of transactions.

In its latest regional analysis, Nationwide reported that house prices in Greater London had climbed 20.6 per cent in the year to the first quarter to an average of £35,378. This compared with a national average increase of 8.6 per cent, and a decline of 0.5 per cent in Scotland.

Separate official figures showed the number of repossessions fell to the lowest level since late 1989 in the first quarter of this year - down 27 per cent, with 14,869 properties repossessed by lenders.

Mr Sanderson said: "As yet there are few signs the rest of the country will see the strong

US growth highest for nine years

Davis Osborne New York

The US economy grew at an astonishing 5.6 per cent in the first quarter of this year, fuelled notably by a near-doubling in the rate of spending growth by consumers and a surge in business inventory build-up.

The figures far exceeded expectations on Wall Street - something near 4 per cent had been forecast - and represented the highest rate of economic expansion in the US for more than nine years. It also showed

price gains recently recorded in the South-east. Higher prices would eventually tempt more sellers into the market, but it was difficult to predict when.

The national index increased 0.4 per cent in April, with the average house price up to £57,406. This took the year on year change down from 9.7 per

cent in March to 8.9 per cent. The Halifax's house price index, due today, is likely to show a similar April increase, although it is recording a somewhat lower annual inflation rate. Halifax figures have also been showing prices rising faster in London than anywhere else.

The report commented that

a strong acceleration since the last quarter of last year with growth hit 3.8 per cent.

"Job growth is good. Real income is rising. Sentiment is high. Unemployment is the lowest in years. Times are good for American consumers," commented Allen Sinai, economist at Primm Allen Sinai, economist.

The data is bound to rekindle fears of overheating of the economy and a return of inflation. It will also strengthen the camp that believes another interest rate rise is inevitable. But after retreating mildly in the

wake of the report's release, both bond prices and equities began once more to pick up in New York yesterday.

By midday, the Dow Jones industrial average was up by around 70 points, building on the remarkable 179-point gain achieved on Tuesday. Investors may be troubled, however, by hints of inflationary dangers in yesterday's GDP growth report. The key price measure showed an advance of 2.7 per cent for the quarter, the strongest rise seen since the first quarter of 1995.

GDP per capita was highest in Greater London in 1995, at £12,503.

BAT urged to speak out over US insurance cover

Magnus Grimmond

BAT Industries is facing criticism from one of its institutional shareholders for its failure to comment on a claim that the potentially enormous legal claims resulting from its tobacco activities are substantially covered by insurance.

Neil Woodford of Perpetual, the Henley-based investment group with a £120m investment in the group, yesterday called on Martin Broughton, chief executive, to clarify the issue following a report last week by Schroder Securities suggesting "comprehensive general liability insurance coverage probably exists for a variety of tobacco-related claims".

A \$300bn (£185bn), 25-year deal to settle claims made by state governments and personal injury litigants has recently been mooted in the US. But it had been thought the tobacco

companies would have to bear the full cost as calls on general liability insurance policies had been excluded by the wording of the contracts.

But Mr Woodford said there were clear historic precedents from cases involving pollution that attempts by insurance companies to write comprehensive exclusion clauses into policies were not always upheld by the courts.

"The perception of the investment community is that there is an enormous black hole in relation to tobacco liabilities. The question I want to know is how much insurance coverage there is in place to cover a hit from product liability claims? I believe [BAT's] shares are substantially undervalued. I believe there is a lot more the company could do to realise that undervaluation," he said.

But his demands, at an ana-

lysts' presentation of BAT's first-quarter results, fell on deaf ears yesterday. Mr Broughton described the issue as "a highly complex subject, both factually and legally".

Both the types of cases and the issues vary from state to state, involves many different insurers, over many years and with different wording in each.

"In typical US fashion, it is certain to require litigation to clarify that and I do not want to prejudice our position by commenting further on that."

The comments came as BAT reported that pre-tax profits just crept ahead to £591m in the first three months of the year, from £590m before. Mr Broughton said the group was still interested in an acquisition to boost its financial services business in the independent financial intermediaries market, but nothing was imminent.

Investment column, page 26

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100									
Index	4436.00	+2.80	+0.1	4444.30	4056.60	3.64			
FTSE 250	4498.70	-8.30	-0.2	4729.40	4468.40	3.57			
FTSE 350	2168.70	+0.30	+0.0	2194.30	2017.90	3.59			
FTSE SmallCap	2296.46	+2.38	+0.1	2374.20	2178.29	3.05			
FTSE All-Share	2138.31	+0.43	+0.0	2163.94	1989.78	3.59			
New York	7021.83	+59.80	+0.9	7085.16	5032.94	1.82			
Hong Kong	19151.12	+480.75	+2.6	19446.00	17303.85	0.981			
Tokyo	12803.30	+302.88	+2.4	13888.24	12085.17	3.331			
Frankfurt	3438.07	+54.88	+1.6	3460.59	2846.77	1.581			

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES									
Short sterling									
Index	6.22	7.00	7.45	8.03	7.54	8.14			
UK	5.69	6.16	6.73	6.85	6.94	6.89			
US	0.96	0.81	2.35	2.51					
Germany	3.18	3.31	5.82	6.34	6.58				

Bond Yields									
Medium Bond (%)									
Index	192.5	14	7.8	182	6.5	3.7			
UK	961	40	4.4	1417.5	48.5	3.5			
US	494	20	4.2	230.5	17	6.9			

CURRENCIES									
£/\$									
Index	1.6313	+0.79c	1.4965						
US	1.6310	-1.70c	1.4953						
DM	2.8138	+0.93p	2.2950						
¥	206.776	+¥1.294	157.305						
Index	100.3	+0.4	83.5						

Dollar									
Index	0.6130	+0.21	0.6682						
US	0.6169	+0.64	0.6688						
DM	1.2248	-0.25p	1.5336						
¥	126.755	+¥0.18	105.115						
Index	106.2	+0.3	99.9						

OTHER INDICATORS									
Oil Brent	18.40	+0.19	18.33						
Gold	340.10	+0.25	339.55						
Gold E	209.80	+1.27	262.98						
Base Rates	-	-	8.00p	6.75					

White House pushes for tobacco talks

The White House was last night due to resume talks attempting to hammer out an all-inclusive \$300bn (£185bn) settlement of tobacco litigation in the US.

A spokesman said Bruce Lindsey, a Presidential aide, had scheduled "several, multiple tobacco-related meetings" that would focus on last week's US district court ruling that the government could regulate tobacco sales and marketing, but not promotion and advertising. President Bill Clinton has already said he will appeal against the limits on government regulatory powers imposed by the court.

Meanwhile, a Mississippi state judge in a \$650m smoking-related death case was yesterday deciding whether to step down following allegations from the tobacco industry's lawyers.

They have complained that the defence was not properly represented when Judge Joe Landrum twice met lawyers for the plaintiff. The case involves the death of Burt Butler, a barber from Laurel, Mississippi, whom it is alleged died from "second-hand" cigarette smoke in his shop. Judge Landrum has presided over the case since it was filed in 1994.

مكتبة الامم المتحدة

The key questions about Sir Chips and Regan

COMMENT

Did he know, as chief executive of Hambros, that the bid for the Co-op was being constructed on the basis of stolen documents, and if he didn't know, why not?

Can Sir Chips Keswick hope to survive either as chief executive of Hambros or as a director of the Court of the Bank of England? Since the question is being asked both in and outside the City in the wake of the Andrew Regan fiasco, it seems reasonable to try and answer it. The second part is the easier one to address. Even if the Bank felt minded to get rid of him, it could not do so for the time being unless he is shown to be of "lunatic or unsound mind", has been "continuously absent for six months", gone bankrupt or is convicted of an offence. So speaks the 1946 Bank of England Act. Sir Chips may be many things, but lunatic or of unsound mind he is not.

He could, of course, be prevailed upon to resign, but even this seems unlikely, at least until the outcome of the Norton Rose inquiry into Hambros' role in the affair is known. While there is a theoretical conflict of interest in his position, since the Bank of England is Hambros' ultimate regulator, this is satisfied by the fact that the Bank has accepted that the Norton Rose inquiry is for the moment sufficient action.

If the findings of the investigation are adverse, then plainly Sir Chips' position at the Bank of England would be in jeopardy; he would also almost certainly have to go to Hambros. As always in these affairs, the key questions are: did Sir Chips know, and if he didn't, should he have known? Did he know, as chief executive of Hambros, that the bid for the Co-op was being constructed

on the basis of stolen documents, and if he didn't know, why not?

We can only presume that the answer to the first question is that he didn't know, for up until the time of his public apology, Sir Chips had repeatedly backed his client and said that everything was above board. The more intriguing question is whether he should have known. Could his apparent failure to get to the bottom of these matters in any way be considered negligent? This is much more difficult territory. It is already clear that this is not an open and shut case, that although Mr Regan and some immediate aides knew where the information came from, others, some of whom received only summaries of what was in the documents, did not.

All these things are matters of fine judgement. Like the rest of us, Norton Rose is not going to find it easy to call. What is certainly true is that Sir Chips acted honourably and quickly once he realised the full extent of what had happened. He deserves some credit for that at least.

What is also certainly true is that even if he emerges reasonably well from the report, he, and most of the rest of the Court of the Bank of England, are not going to have their contracts renewed by Labour. All 18 directors of the Court are government appointments. Most of them will find themselves as unacceptable to New Labour as they would have been to Old. Why, then, would even signed the business leaders' open letter to

the *Daily Mail* saying Labour couldn't be trusted. As their contracts expire, virtually all the non-execs, Sir Chips included, will be cleared out, to be replaced by more Labour-leaning people. In the absence of lunacy or legislation, however, it's going to take some time. Sir Chips' contract doesn't expire until 28 February 2001.

De Silguy spoke the truth about G3

Rule Britannia! Britannia rules the waves! Britons never, never, never shall be excluded from the G7!

As a rallying cry, it leaves a lot to be desired. Yet politicians of all flavours rushed to condemn Yves-Thibault de Silguy when he suggested that the UK will be squeezed out of the inner circle of international economic management after the start of the single currency. John Major accused the EU's monetary affairs commissioner of being "absurd and arrogant". Tony Blair said it was just not going to happen.

Coming at the tail of an election campaign awash with symbols of bulldozers and lions, this jingoistic reaction should have come as no surprise. But the two party leaders are both mistaken. Mr de Silguy, although French, was neither arrogant nor wrong. The club of rich industrial nations, a completely informal grouping, will inevitably evolve into a G3 after the start of the single currency.

In fact, there is already an inner cabinet consisting of the US, Japan and Germany. Theirs are the world's three main reserve currencies. When the euro exists, there will be even less need to pay attention to fringe currencies like sterling. It will be more important to include Russia - likely to be formally invited to turn the G7 into a G8 at this summer's summit in Denver, than the UK. Or is that going to be a G4 if Canada, Italy and the UK are to be left out?

Britain's influence will be squeezed from below, too, as a growing number of big, newly industrialised economies such as Korea, China, Brazil and even our former colony, India, take their place on the international stage. These increasingly important economic powers are already playing a bigger role in the International Monetary Fund and the Bank for International Settlements. They are likely to want their own G number.

The veteran City economist Stephen Lewis at London Bond Broking points out that the geometry of international meetings has always been variable. The G7 was a G5 until the Italians made a big enough fuss about having overtaken the British economy in size. In practical terms, he argues, it makes no difference - the politicians discuss what they have to discuss with whoever they want or need to on the circuit of international meetings. Flag-waving over G7 membership will not by itself give the UK influence in the inner circle. Mr de Silguy may have been unwise to irritate matters yet further in rela-

tions between Britain and Europe, but he speaks the truth and his remarks highlight a key element of the debate over monetary union. If we stay out, we'll be marginalised, not just in Europe, but in the world too.

Can Ecclestone really own this sport?

Formula One was always going to be a problematic stock market flotation. Its delay raises questions about whether it was ever really possible. What is Formula One and who actually owns it? Bernie Ecclestone is sole owner of the company called Formula One, he organises the events, markets them and sells the TV rights. But he didn't invent the sport, nor does he own it.

Without the teams, or constructors as they are known in the jargon, Formula One would be nothing. They, after all, are the people that stage the crashes. A good number of them said, "Over our dead bodies", when they first read that Mr Ecclestone was planning to capitalise on his position through a £2.5bn stock market flotation.

Some problems have been overcome. A new agreement has been hammered out covering division of TV revenue. But this hasn't solved the core issue, which is ownership of the sport itself. Over the years Mr Ecclestone has built himself a very powerful position within the sport. He certainly controls it. But is it really his to sell?

GKN deal rules out bid for Vickers

Michael Harrison

GKN, the automotive, industrial services and defence group, yesterday unveiled an agreed £352m takeover of a US supplier of metal parts for the car, home appliance and power tool industries.

The deal is the first big acquisition since CK Chow took over as chief executive from Sir David Lees last year and would appear to dash hopes of GKN making a bid for rival engineering group Vickers.

GKN is paying \$570m in cash for Sinter Metals, which is based in Cleveland, Ohio, made up of \$380m for the equity and \$190m for the assumption of debt. The deal will turn GKN into the world's largest supplier of precision pressed powder metal parts with annual sales of \$327m.

The acquisition will be funded from GKN's own resources and Mr Chow said he expected it to be earnings-enhancing in the first year.

Sinter Metals is the world's largest independent manufacturer of powder metal parts with

18 production sites in North America and Europe employing more than 3,000 people.

The total market for these kind of parts is put at £2.8bn a year and growing. They are increasingly being substituted for forged steel, cast iron and other metalworked parts because they are cheaper to produce, lighter, stronger and easier to press into complex shapes.

Demand is growing at a rate of 11 per cent a year in the US and 6 per cent in Europe. About 70 per cent of Sinter's output goes into the automotive sector. The rest goes into the white goods, power tool and lawn and garden products industry. The US company will be combined with GKN's own powder metallurgy interests in the UK and Italy, enabling it to achieve a global presence.

GKN said it had received acceptances from shareholders representing some 43 per cent of Sinter's stock. The offer is expected to close late this month.

News of the deal lifted GKN shares 38p to a close of 949p but Vickers dropped 3p to 212p as analysts concluded that GKN

had probably used up too much of its firepower buying Sinter.

GKN had £528m in cash reserves at the end of last year but faces a \$600m settlement in the US after a court ruled in favour of franchisees of GKN exhaust systems which alleged misuse of advertising levies by GKN.

GKN has made a £270m provision in its 1996 accounts to cover the potential cost of the claim and an appeal is under way.

Although analysts generally welcomed the deal there was some caution about it increasing its exposure to a highly cyclical sector such as the car industry when sales were stagnant in mature markets such as the US and Europe, leaving margins under pressure.

"One would have thought GKN may have wanted to diversify its businesses a little and become less cyclical," said one analyst.

Other than car parts, its main businesses are the helicopter maker Westland, the Chappell division and industrial services.



Big deal: The purchase is GKN's largest acquisition since CK Chow took over as chief executive last year

BA drops division spin-off project

Michael Harrison

British Airways yesterday scrapped plans to spin off its engineering division and sell a stake in the business to outside investors amid mounting fears that it was pushing the concept of a "virtual airline" too far.

Bob Ayling, BA's chief executive, said the plan to turn the engineering department into a limited company had been postponed until at least 2000 unless there was a radical restructuring of the industry as a whole.

A spokesman said that while anxieties among the 9,500-strong workforce had been a factor, BA had decided to postpone the plan because market conditions were not right.

However, BA is pressing ahead with a programme to streamline the engineering division. This will involve the sale of its wheels and brakes and landing gear overhaul units to private buyers, the establishment of the parts supply operation as a profit centre, the outsourcing of its information technology functions and a £20m investment in a new pneumatics and hydraulics workshop.

"Achieving these improvements will satisfy our customers and allow us to sub-contract less aircraft engineering services," said Mr Ayling. "This will provide the job security we all want."

There are no plans at this stage to seek buyers for any other parts of engineering nor to invite outside investors in the overall business.

The aim of the business efficiency programme launched last year by BA is to save £1bn from its costs. The plan will involve 5,000 job cuts but BA has pledged to take on a similar number of staff in other areas, mainly customer services.

Lathiga

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IN BRIEF

Greenhills earns AIM rebuke

The Alternative Investment Market of the London Stock Exchange said it had decided to censure Greenhills because it "failed to make timely and appropriate announcements or disclosures". AIM said the company's failure to disclose certain information gave "a significantly misleading impression about the company's financial position". It said the lapses were related to the opening, development and closing of Thunder Drive, certain agreements and matters disclosed in the company's admission document or which were subsequently announced which were not advanced, and the financial position of the company. It said the company lodged a notice of appeal, but then went into receivership and, eventually, liquidation and the appeal has not been pursued. AIM said it had not censured any of the company's directors and its censure "should not be taken as implying criticism of any director's conduct".

French unemployment declines

Unemployment in France fell by 4,800 in March, the second monthly decline in succession. There was a reduction in youth unemployment, more than offsetting increases in joblessness amongst the over-50s and those out of work for more than a year. But the fall was not enough to reduce the jobless rate from its post-war high of 12.8 per cent. With signs that growth in France is picking up, most economists expect further, politically welcome reductions in unemployment later this year without ruling out the possibility of short-term increases.

Kvaerner Energy to axe 137 jobs

Kvaerner Energy said it advised trade union officials, management and staff that there will be 137 job losses within its thermal power division at Clydebank in Scotland. Chris Packard, president of Kvaerner Energy, said: "Continuing intense competition in the market-place and a lack of new orders has forced the company to make this decision. It is hoped that the total number of compulsory redundancies might be reduced by the transfer of some staff to Kvaerner Energy's sister company in Oslo."

Wickes nets £7.5m for continental sale

Wickes, the troubled DIY group that was rocked last year by a £50m accounting scandal, has agreed to sell its continental subsidiaries. Wickes BV, Wickes NV and Wickes France SARL in total. The company said the proceeds, which will be subject to final audit, will be used to repay bank indebtedness. In addition, Bricorama will be used to repay bank indebtedness on the balance sheet of Wickes assuming £6.4m of finance leases on the balance sheet of Wickes. After expenses, the transaction is expected to result in a reduction of approximately £12.5m in the consolidated net indebtedness of Wickes. The companies being sold operate 39 do-it-yourself stores in The Netherlands, Belgium and France under the Wickes brand and concept.

Aston Villa float raises £12.6m

Aston Villa, the Premier League football club, has raised around £12.6m in its public share offering for its flotation on the stock market. The club said 454,545 ordinary shares previously placed with institutions were subject to recall to satisfy applications from the public at £11 a share. A total of 7,708 applications were received for 688,780 shares. Applications from full-time employees amounting to 19,620 shares would be allocated in full, as would requests from season ticket-holders for up to 200 shares.

Hiscox moves to oust individual names

Terry Macalister

Another leading figure at Lloyd's of London has applied to the insurance market's ruling council for permission to remove individual directors from his syndicates.

The move by Robert Hiscox, former deputy chairman of Lloyd's, comes hard on the heels of a similar push to remove names by John Charman, the insurance market's deputy chairman.

Representatives of names are angry about the move by

Hiscox Syndicates to oust them and are worried about the future role of sole traders in the 300-year-old insurance market.

The Lloyd's Names Association Working Party (LNAWP) said Mr Hiscox and Mr Charman were part of a concerted effort to rid the insurance market of its 10,000 remaining names and replace them with corporate capital. Chris Stockwell, chairman of LNAWP, said: "Mr Hiscox said names were sheep to be sheared. Now he seems intent on giving them their final haircut."

"We do not want to be hand-cuffed. At the moment we have no such [buyout] intentions, but we do not rule it out in future," said Mr Hiscox, who looks after the affairs of syndicates 33, 625 and 52.

Mr Hiscox played down the significance of his application, saying no decision had been made on whether to buy out the names. He wanted approval from the Lloyd's council so his managed syndicates, which are in the throes of being merged, could proceed quickly should a buyout be decided.

But, Mr Hiscox said: "Ultimately we feel even-handed about this. We could run our business more cheaply [without names] but then we would be putting an awful lot of [our] money at risk."

He said he was in two minds as to the advantages and disadvantages of names versus corporate capital. There were savings to be made if the names' system of annual ventures was abolished and it would be much easier to have one major shareholder rather than hundreds of small ones, he believed.

But, Mr Hiscox said: "Ultimately we feel even-handed about this. We could run our business more cheaply [without names] but then we would be putting an awful lot of [our] money at risk."

Mr Hiscox said that in his former capacity as deputy chairman he had introduced a range of policies that greatly benefited individual investors: "It was the value group which I chaired which introduced security of tenure for names and pre-emption rights, which led to the auctions of Lloyd's capacity."

The reference to sheep was made in a personal letter to a friend, Mr Hiscox said. He was quoting someone else and was pointing out that some names, like other investors, could make disastrous personal decisions.

Banks attack 'Which' report

John Willcock

Britain's high street banks yesterday mounted a furious pre-emptive assault on a report to be published today by the Consumers' Association that claims consumers will get a worse deal on mortgages and savings because of the spate of building society conversions.

The British Bankers' Association's pro-emptive strike, entitled *Mutuality Myths*, claimed the Consumers' Association's conclusions were the "result of a too-narrow perspective".

Tim Sweeney, director-general of the BBA, said: "Beware the fallacy that competition is decreased by building society conversions."

The report in *Which* magazine argues that consumers will pay higher rates for mortgages and reap lower rates on savings from building societies that convert to banks because banks have to pay dividends to shareholders.

The Consumers' Association is alarmed by the conversions of the Halifax, Woolwich, Alliance & Leicester and Northern Rock building societies this year.

It also warns that the ever-shrinking mutual sector, headed

by Nationwide and Bradford & Bingley, could be further squeezed by hostile takeovers. Although technically difficult to implement, Abbey National managed to buy National & Provincial Building Society 18 months ago against the initial opposition of the target's board.

Which says: "Many people are celebrating windfalls from building society conversions but consumers could end up paying dearly for their short-term financial gain."

The Consumers' Association says the societies which were preparing to convert were already charging more for mortgages than those determined to stay mutual: "Consumers with Nationwide would have paid £220 less interest on a £60,000 loan than with Alliance & Leicester over 12 months, £228 less than with Woolwich and £210 less than with Halifax."

The BBA fired back: "Whatever the fate of the mutuals, competition among other providers will sustain consumer choice. The report's interest rate comparisons are a relatively crude measure of performance for customers, covering a narrow period and a narrow product range."

Market at risk, warns BG

British Gas warned yesterday that the introduction of full competition in the domestic gas market next year could be jeopardised unless the Monopolies & Mergers Commission inquiry into its pipeline arm TransCo gave it long-term regulatory stability, writes Michael Harrison.

The warning came from David Varney, chief executive of the renamed BG, at the company's annual shareholders meeting in Birmingham. The company was referred to the MMC last October after it refused to accept price controls proposed by the industry regulator, Clare Spottiswoode of Ofgas, claiming they could result in 10,000 job losses and a £400m cut in annual cash flow.

The MMC is due to report by the end of next month, meaning the decision on the future of the business will almost certainly be taken by a Labour government.

Mr Varney told shareholders: "It is essential for this MMC inquiry to provide TransCo with long-term regulatory clarity and stability, which is vital for the successful implementation of full domestic competition by the end of 1998."

Summary of Accounts

for the year ended 31 December 1996

		PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY	
		1996	1995
		£m	£m
Profit and Loss Account	1996	1995	
Turnover	28.0	27.3	
Operating expenditure	27.1	26.4	
Operating profit	0.9	0.9	
Net interest	0.7	0.7	
Dividends receivable	4.4	9.1	
Repayment of Government grants	(4.4)	(8.9)	
Profit on ordinary activities before taxation	1.6	1.7	
Taxation	-	0.3	
Profit for the year	1.6	2.0	
Transfer to stock redemption fund	(0.1)	(0.3)	
Transfer to profit and loss account reserve	1.5	1.7	
Balance Sheet	1996	1995	
Fixed assets:			
Tangible assets	24.2	24.7	
Investments:			
Port of London Properties Ltd Group	13.4	14.4	
Stock redemption fund	9.5	9.4	
	47.1	48.5	
Net current asset	13.0	11.2	
	60.1	59.7	
Creditors:			
Amounts falling due after more than one year:			
Loans	10.2	10.2	
Other amounts	2.8	3.0	
Reserves:			
Revaluation	13.4	14.4	
Stock redemption fund	9.5	9.4	
Profit and loss	24.2	22.7	
	60.1	59.7	
Cash Flow Statement			
Increase/(decrease) in cash	2.1	(0.1)	

SIR BRIAN SHAW
Chairman

D.J. JEFFERY
Chief Executive

G.P. ELLIS
Chief Financial Officer

Published by the Port of London Authority under Section 8(3) of the Port of London Act 1968

The above is an extract from the published Accounts of the Port of London Authority for the year ended 31 December 1996 which have been delivered to The Secretary of State for Transport. G.E. Ennals, Secretary

Copies of the report and accounts 1996 can be obtained from the Secretary's Department, Port of London Authority, Devon House, 30-31 St. Katharine's Way, London E1 1LB. Price £5.00

Orchestra sets his stall out

Racing

RICHARD EDMONDSON
reports from Ascot

Double Trigger, the leading force among stayers for some time now, went into yesterday's Sagaro Stakes with nine Group victories to his name. Like another who has held top office for a while, he found No 10 an elusive target yesterday.

The chestnut's efforts to record a hat-trick in the Group Three race foundered dramatically as he limped home last behind Orchestra Stall.

Willawander was second and Election Day, who at one stage looked as though he might finish on the date his name suggested, struggled back up into third.

Orchestra Stall has suffered

for much of his career because of an apprehension (drawn from his breeding) that he would perform best on spongy going. He disappointed on such a surface on his reappearance, but looked a different performer yesterday. "We didn't like the idea of running on this ground," Lord Swaythling, the gelding's part-owner, said. "But obviously the horse did. Now we'll have to put him in all the decent staying races."

There is a slight problem there. The entries for the Ascot Gold Cup closed yesterday and Orchestra Stall's name was not among them. Nevertheless there will be other prizes for the five-year-old, even if none of them come in beauty contests. He was by no means the pick of the carwalk yesterday.

Jyush was certainly the nois-

iest, blasting out snorts that would have extinguished a brazier. Willawander took the eye with his caramel coat, but Double Trigger, who looks as though he has been the victim of a whitewash attack, was again the magnet. It remains a surprise

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Brambles Way (Redcar 3.30)
NB: Ziggy's Dancer (Wolverhampton 3.45)

prise his rider comes out wearing a helmet and not a seclusion. The favourite was reported by connections to be full of beans, but from half-way he moved as if there was also chips, Yorkshire pudding and smelting down there as well. Jason Weaver had to get to work.

"Three and a half out I thought we still had a chance," the jockey said. "I was pushing and pumping from Swinley Bottom but I was like that last year so I wasn't that worried. But then he was gone. Obviously I'm disappointed but he'll be back."

There was no easy explanation from the horse's trainer either. "I told Jason that if they were going to go to let him come in his own time, but he didn't come," Mark Johnston said. "It may be that he doesn't try when he isn't in front. Jason said that he didn't make much effort and we ought to try him in blinkers but then that was his opinion this time last year."

Orchestra Stall's victory launched a double for Richard Quinn, successful later in the Victoria Cup on Tregaron. The latter was considered atrociously

handicapped by Reg Akhurst, but the trainer usually says that before he wins this race. He has collected it twice before with Sky Cloud and Far North.

Akhurst's horses returned from action for part of last season as if they required an inhaler and the trainer put this down to fields of oilseed rape near the Epsom gallops. "It's detrimental to people who have got asthma and I'm sure it's detrimental to horses," he said. "The pollen is rich and oily and we had a lot of lung infections."

The farmer has already planted it again for this year but he's a terrific chap because he's sprayed it and killed the rape. "I owe him a debt of gratitude," Pointblank. If you ever see Bert Perry in a betting shop having a punt on a South Hatch runner, match his bet.



Akehurst: Trains Tregaron

There was a blast from the past in the Chobham Stakes when Nwaamuis, who was fifth in the 1995 2,000 Guineas, finally found his way back to the winners' enclosure at the age of five. The old horse has been kept by the track by a nervous system called EPM. Someone may be suffering from a similarly debilitating affliction tonight known as ex-PM.

Dazzle may yet shine again when it matters most

Election day - time for some Wright thinking. Not about who governs Britain, but who will be the governors of the Rowley Mile after the 2,000 and 1,000 Guineas this weekend. This year's Guineas trials have been less than conclusive and Chris Wright, who compiles Timeform's much-respected time-figures, admits this year's search for that winning ante-post Classic bet is harder than ever.

Wright says "Entrepreneur is impossible to assess. He cannot be faulted in terms of hav-

ing done everything asked of him so far but his time-figures in his three races as a two-year-old of 52.88 and 71 are meaningless in terms of assessing his chances of a Classic, where the winner is expected to return a figure of at least 121."

"Yalantance and Revoque returned reasonable figures of 110 each when separated by just a head in the Greenham Stakes. They make more appeal than Desert Story, an exposed colt who returned a figure of 109 when winning the Craven

Ian Davies canvasses the views of Timeform's clock guru on the Classics

Stakes. That's a fair figure, but they finished in a heap and you have thought that form was not good enough for Classic.

"Hidden Meadow provided a figure of 103 when winning the Free Handicap and needs to improve."

For the 1,000 Guineas, the trials have been even more muddling. Wright says "Reunion returned a figure of 101 when

winning the Nell Gwyn Stakes while Dance Parade clocked just 78 in the Fred Darling Stakes. So, with nothing having impressed this year, I'm inclined to go back to last year's figures and Danze's 118 when winning the Cherry Hinton Stakes at Newmarket over six furlongs in July. Admittedly she disappointed on both subsequent starts in the autumn and there

is an argument for saying she has failed to train on and that figure has little relevance for a Classic over a mile.

"However, the Cherry Hinton form looked solid at the time - Ocean Ridge, the runner-up, subsequently won the Prix Robert Papin - and Danze's 118, for the 1,000 with Coral and Lookbooks reminds me a bit of Komura."

"She was ultimately disappointing as a two-year-old in 1988, having clocked a fast figure in the early summer, but

bounced back to run a big race [she was second to Musical Bliss] in the 1989 1,000 Guineas."

Looking further ahead to the Derby, although the key trials have yet to be run, at this stage Wright likes Fairfax, winner of the Fildes Stakes. Wright says "Fairfax returned a figure of 119 - the best by a three-year-old this year. If you take the view that he is bred to be better at a mile and a half than nine furlongs, he would be fair value [William Hill and the Tote go 20-1] for Epsom."

2.30 Abstone Queen 4.00 Broad River
3.00 Always Lucky (nb) 4.50 Kingdom Emperor
3.30 Brambles Way (nap) 5.00 Lady Sheriff

GOING: Firm. Good to Firm in places (wet). STALLS: Straight - centre; rest - inside. DRAW ADVANTAGE: High from 10 to 11.

Left-hand, light course, with a one mile straight.

Course to off Allotment (A66). Rowley Mile (Dartmouth - Salisbury line) 1000m. ADVERTISEMENT: 1000m. Rowley Mile (Dartmouth - Salisbury line) 1000m. ADVERTISEMENT: 1000m. Rowley Mile (Dartmouth - Salisbury line) 1000m.

LEADING TRAINERS WITH WINNERS: New M. Bevelay - 11 winners from 320 runners. 127 runners, 11.4%, 125.00; M. Johnston - 13 winners, 137 runners, 11.4%, 127.87; T. Barron - 10 winners, 107 runners, 11.4%, 127.87.

LEADING JOCKEYS: M. Bevelay - 11 winners, 127 runners, 11.4%, 127.87; T. Barron - 10 winners, 107 runners, 11.4%, 127.87; M. Johnston - 13 winners, 137 runners, 11.4%, 127.87.

WINNERS IN THIS LAST SEVEN DAYS: 1.000m. Rowley Mile (Dartmouth - Salisbury line) 1000m. ADVERTISEMENT: 1000m. Rowley Mile (Dartmouth - Salisbury line) 1000m.

LONG-DISTANCE WINNERS: G. C. (4.00) won 271 miles by J. Neville from C. G. (4.00).

2.30 ELECTION DAY SELLING STAKES (CLASS F) £3,300 added 7f Penalty Value £2,895

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Morgan knocked out by Hendry and the 'Prince'

Snooker
GUY HODGSON reports from the Crucible

Alex Higgins was not only a master of the snooker cue, he was more than adept at finding reasons for a defeat. "He was in my line of thought," he once raged about a referee who, he claimed, was deliberately standing in the wrong place for every shot he attempted.

Darren Morgan had a variation

on the theme after losing 13-10 to Stephen Hendry in his Embassy World Championship quarter-final yesterday. It was not the referee diverting his gaze, nor even the streaker who interrupted Ronnie O'Sullivan's concentration in February's Benson and Hedges Masters, but the far more menacing shape of the boxer, 'Prince' Naseem Hamed. "It had a massive bearing on the result," he said. The world featherweight champion, a friend of Hendry, sat in the press seats which are

just a few feet away from the table and so unscrupled Morgan that he insisted he was removed. "I've never met the man," he said. "I've only seen him on telly and it was like 'wow'."

"It was putting me off and getting Stephen in the mood so I politely asked for him to be moved so I couldn't see him. He has got an intimidating face, you wonder if at any minute he's going to jump out and lay one on you."

The last sentence was said humorously, although you can

imagine that the steward who had to tell Naseem to "hop it or there'll be trouble" failed to see the funny side. Morgan, too, was sufficiently upset to contemplate refusing to play unless he was moved.

All of which played into the hands of the six-times world champion, who is the last person to need any help. Both players agreed that the Naseem-influenced session, which Hendry took 6-2, was the decisive one and yesterday a 9-7 lead

World Cup fight over 'nothing'

Football
NICK DUXBURY

England and Germany were told yesterday by the second most senior figure in world football that they are engaged in a meaningless battle for the 2006 World Cup finals.

Sepp Blatter, the general secretary of the game's international governing body, Fifa, speaking at the Soccerex exhibition at the Wembley Conference Centre, also reprimanded the governing body of European football, Uefa, over their efforts to reshape the rules of the World Cup bidding process.

In addition, Blatter indicated that fans who wanted to watch World Cup finals in their entirety after 1998 should start saving for a satellite dish. Uefa want only one bid per continent for the 2006 event, but Blatter said: "It is Fifa's World Cup, not a matter for confederations."

"Every national association that is part of Fifa has the right to bid, and Germany and England have the same rights to be a candidate. These rights are for all associations, not for a confederation to decide."

There have been whispering campaigns against England, after they decided to press on with a bid, despite an alleged "gentleman's agreement" that Germany should carry the European banner.

"The fight between England and Germany is for nothing," Blatter said. "At this stage we haven't even opened the official bidding for 2006 - that will come at the end of the World Cup next year, in the autumn."

On the question of TV, Blatter said: "The World Cup in 1998 is not a problem, it will be broadcast by the so-called Official Television. But things will change after that, although I can promise that in Europe at least the first game, one semi-final and the final itself will be available on free TV."

However, while the cameras do appear to be calling the tune increasingly, Blatter maintained that their influence would only be allowed to go so far.

"What we could not accept from TV is the idea of time-outs or the game split into quarters or thirds, let alone the use of third referees in the stands," he said. "If you lose human error from the game, you will also lose



Higher than a Rocket: Minnesota forward Kevin Garnett (left) outjumps Houston Rockets' Kevin Willis to control a rebound as Garnett's Timberwolves' team-mate Terry Porter looks on in the NBA first-round play-off game in Minnesota yesterday. It was all to no avail as the Rockets won 125-120 and took the series 3-0

US on target for first title in 64 years

Ice hockey

The United States scored their third-period goals to beat Italy 4-2 and keep their 100 per cent record at the World Championship in Turku, Finland, yesterday.

The victory left the Americans, who are seeking their first world title in 64 years, with a perfect record of three wins and lifted them to joint first place with Sweden in Pool B.

Marty McInnis collected the winner midway through the final period when he snapped a point-blank wrist-shot past the Italian netminder, Mike Rosati. Paul Ranheim later added an insurance goal into an empty net to close the scoring.

Dan Plante had put the Americans 2-1 ahead just 18 seconds into the final period when his cross-ice pass deflected in off the skate of Robert Nardella. Dino Felicetti then replied for Italy to make it 2-2.

Italy had taken a 1-0 lead in the first period, Chris Bartolone blasting a slapshot past Chris Terreri. The US levelled the score in the second period when Rosati was unable to control the rebound off Ken Klee's shot from the point, leaving a loose puck for Chris Tancill to tap in.

Lewis' date fixed with Akinwande

Boxing

Lennox Lewis's World Boxing Council heavyweight championship defence against his fellow Briton Henry Akinwande has been confirmed for Atlantic City on 12 July.

After lengthy negotiations, agreement was finally reached between Lewis's handlers, Panos Eliades and the New Jersey-based Main Events, and Akinwande's promoter, Don King.

The fight will be shown in Britain at midnight on Sky TV and will run on from a promotion in this country featuring the British featherweight champion, Paul Ling. Lewis will have a part share of a promotion which could net him in excess of £2m, while the King-Akinwande package will be £1.25m.

Atlantic City for the 31-year-old Lewis, winning three of his fights in the New Jersey gambling resort. Lewis regained the title by defeating a mentally confused Oliver McColl in Las Vegas in February. The unbeaten London-born Akinwande, also 31, has relinquished his World Boxing Organisation crown for this chance as the official WBC's mandatory contender.

English pair gain credit

Table tennis

Katy Parker, who, at 12 years, four months and 23 days, is the youngest girl to represent England in the World Championships, made a quick but honourable exit in the preliminary rounds of the mixed doubles at Manchester yesterday.

Parker and her 13-year-old partner, Michael Chan of Weybridge, Surrey, were beaten 2-11, 2-14 by the Ghanaian teenagers Eric Amoah, 17, and Hagar Amo, 18, in just under 14 minutes but were certainly not disgraced.

After the match Parker said: "I thought I played my best today. I wasn't nervous and I didn't feel under any pressure. It was a very good experience for me."

"We started a bit slowly but we played a lot better in the second game when we won several points in a row. I really enjoyed it."

Chan, who is ranked 12 in England at under-17 level, agreed. "It was a great experience and when we came back from 3-10 in the second game to 11-13 I thought we had a chance," he said.

Yesterday's match proved that both Parker and Chan have good forehands and good temperaments against far more experienced opponents. Amoah played regularly for Ghana in the men's team event and at six foot had a much longer reach than his diminutive rivals.

The Ghanaian pair went away from 9-6 to 19-10 before the opening game and led 10-3 in the second. But back came the English youngsters to 11-13 before Amoah and Amo then moved on to victory.

China, attempting to repeat their feat of two years ago when they took all seven titles, won the men's team event when they beat France 3-1 in the final. On Tuesday the Chinese

Ryder aim for Olazabal

Golf

With five of the top six European Ryder Cup players featuring in the Italian Open, which begins in Brescia today, there could be a flurry of place-swapping by Sunday night.

But most interest will be centred on two men not in those lofty positions: Spain's Jose Maria Olazabal and Bernhard Langer of Germany.

Neither player has more than a dozen tournaments left this year to qualify for the event. After playing two tournaments Olazabal still has to rest his rehabilitating feet after his 18-month injury layoff and Langer is committed elsewhere than the European Tour.

Both, however, are aware of the need to qualify automatically in a top-10 ranking by 31 August when the team is selected, but will not alter their playing schedules. "I have to

